

# What is Christianity?



Revolutionary insight into Christianity

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Olatunji Akintilo, MD

## **WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?**

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# Acknowledgements

Undoubtedly, the conviction of the heart that leads to a person's acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the work of the Holy Spirit. Understanding Christianity is a little different. It is simple, yet delicate and complex. While the Holy Spirit is still very much involved, the individual has a major role to play. Each person has to pursue truth with zeal and sincerity. But how shall they learn without a teacher?

I wish to acknowledge the pastors and other ministers of the gospel that work day and night to teach the word of God. They labor to make truth available to those that seek it. They put their own lives aside in obedience to Jesus Christ's command to feed the flock. Without such individuals, the effort of many Christians' pursuit of truth would be fruitless. New converts would be dismayed and led astray. It would be impossible to comprehend what Christianity is all about.

A list of such great men and women of the Christian faith, such as the pastors and ministers, could fill a book. While I'd like to honor them all, I will take the liberty to mention a few.

I'd like to give prominent recognition to the leaders of fundamental, Bible believing, Bible teaching Baptist churches in America. Though independent in operation, such churches are united in doctrine, in the pursuit of holiness, and in strict adherence to the word of God. Without such committed, God-fearing men and women many young Christians would fall prey to the false teachers that typify Christianity in our day and age. Truth has been so sugarcoated by popular teachings as to be indiscernible. Without the continued high price being paid on a daily basis by those that remain faithful to the cause of Christ in the dissemination of the complete, balanced word of God, the writing of this book would have been impossible.

Foremost is Pastor Milton Jones of Heritage Baptist Church at Frankfort, Illinois, a contemporary example of total commitment to Christ. His passionate teachings and adherence to holiness has helped many to be better Christians. I can proudly say that I am a Christian by conviction.

There would not be enough space to mention the names of men like Russ Hansen of In The Beginning, Inc., that abandoned lucrative careers to teach God's precepts. Mr. Hansen teaches God's Creation of the earth and refutes the fallacious evolution theories. Dr. David

Cummings of Baptist World Mission teaches Baptist history. There are many more that I would like to mention but space will not allow.

On a special note, I am thankful to my wife, Lara, for her unwavering support in the writing of this book.

# Introduction

Growing up in a small town in the western part of Nigeria, a West African nation, I was exposed to Christianity as young child. My late grandmother was a staunch Christian who practiced her faith with admirable intensity. She attended five o'clock Morning Prayer meeting at the church on a daily basis. She read the Bible to the best of her limited ability, often expressing frustration of not understanding what she read. Notwithstanding the lack of comprehension, she persisted in reading the Bible regularly and aloud so her grandchildren including myself could hear. She was in attendance at church every Sunday. Whenever we grandchildren visited, we were taken to church to attend the services along with her.

I am so thankful to God for these early experiences. I saw the practice of Christianity in my locality. If nothing at all was accomplished, it raised a big question in me during early childhood. I always wondered, what is Christianity all about?

My grandmother and the congregation at the church she attended apparently did the best they could to worship God. To my young, naive mind, it all appeared as a big social club. There were parties almost every Sunday, social events predominate the church services. Church was a place to display the latest fashion. There was almost no mention of Jesus Christ. No mention of salvation. To join the church there were mandatory catechism classes to attend. This would be followed by a confirmation ceremony at completion. That's it! You are now a confirmed Christian. You could formally join the church. You are supposed to own a Bible. A few smart ones could actually read *Bibeli Mimo*<sup>1</sup>, the Holy Bible in Yoruba, the local language. Still, the Bible was an item to display rather than study. In my observation, there would be few if any that understood what the Christian faith really was.

I grew up into adulthood to see the same practice of uninformed Christianity perpetuated, probably even worse. However, I had an opportunity of sharing a room with a born-again Christian while I studied at the university. I believe this was by divine appointment. My roommate would not leave me alone. He constantly bombarded me with the gospel message. Following a considerable period of resistance, I finally accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. It was then I got to know any appreciable thing about salvation in Christ. Nevertheless, I was still plagued by the question that has remained unanswered - what

is Christianity? Praise God. When I had the advantage of living in America I was led through God's grace to enlightened teachers of the Bible. At last, after almost thirty years of an active search, my question was answered. It is this exciting discovery that I wish to address in this book. Hopefully the content would help others who may be in a similar situation that I was in. I also believe it would help new converts, those that recently committed their lives to Christ to learn of this delicate yet so fundamental issue, to discover true Christianity. It would also be a useful tool for discipleship of new believers.

All scriptural references are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version.

# Chapter 1

## The Nature of Man

Typically, a person from the historic pre-computer era remembers with fondness the embarrassing experience of the first computer purchase. Everyone talked about it; friends, co-workers, even the spouse couldn't go a day without mentioning something that could have been done more effectively with a personal computer (a PC). For an illustration, let's say this individual, J.T., finally succumbed to the pressure, saved up some money and went to the computer store to get a PC.

"How may I help you today?" the nerdy computer salesman at the store asked.

"I want a good PC," J.T. said.

The salesman likely wondered what planet J.T. was from. However, he courteously proceeded to ask how much RAM memory was desired on the hard drive, how much gigabyte storage? How about the frequency? How many megahertz? What model of hard drive, sound card, CD drive, CD burner and Zip® drive? How about a monitor, a printer, and connecting cables? The questions kept coming, and *J.T.* stood in confounded silence, wondering what all those strange terms meant.

This was my experience when I bought my first computer. My jaw dropped in total amazement. I was so ignorant about computers. I didn't even know what to order. I was clueless. Finally I had to admit to the salesman that I didn't have the slightest idea what he was talking about. I excused myself, went back home, did some research and talked to my computer savvy friends. Then I returned to the store confident and informed, ready to place an order for the "good PC" that would suit my needs.

Sadly enough, this analogy applies to the nature of man. If we would be honest, most of us know very little about ourselves. Our basic knowledge of human anatomy is grossly limited. This reality results in hopelessness, lack of vision, poverty, ignorance and disease. Not to mention the societal chaos, lack of respect for human lives and the worship of money. If Almighty God were to come down to some of us today with a promise to grant one request, many wouldn't know what to ask. Some folks will know what to ask, but what they'd ask for



might not be good for them. And this would be because of a complete ignorance regarding “how many gigabytes are needed to run our hard drives.” We don’t even know our need.

This state of ignorance is nothing to be ashamed of. No one came to this world with a Ph.D.; we all came with a blank slate as it were. It is not a sin to be ignorant, but it is a sin to remain so—just as the Bible states in Hosea 4:6, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*. This chain of ignorance has to be broken. We need to know who we are.

Christianity as a practice relates to the man and the woman, often referred to collectively as man. Without mankind and without Christ there would not be anything called Christianity. So, in order to fully understand Christianity, there is a need to understand the nature of man.

In order to discover the nature of man, let us go back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis and closely examine the first few chapters.

### **In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**

**Genesis 1:1 (KJV)**

Here it is. The very first verse in the Bible. It tells us about God being the creator of the heaven and the earth. Not some mindless evolution as is being taught in our schools and commonly believed by the society at large. The evolutionists have deceived us to believe that some living thing can develop into something else. This is an absolute fallacy. If evolution were true, a banana left on a table should “evolve” into something different if left long enough unattended. So far no one can claim to have seen that happen. Believers in our Creator will agree that such a thing will never happen. The banana will simply rot away, rather than evolve into an orange or anything else. God created the heaven and the earth, period.

Notably enough, chapter one of Genesis did not reveal anything about the creation of heaven. However, according to verse 2, the earth was created out of nothing. Then in verse 3 and onwards the step-by-step detail of the creation of the earth is described. . God created light on day one, the firmament (skies) on day two, the grass, the herb and fruit trees on day three. Then the sun, the moon and the stars were

created on day four. The creation of fish, the great whales and the birds followed on day five. And the cattle, creeping things and other animals were created on day six. After each of these days, God looked upon the creation and saw that it was good. The days were 24-hour literal days as indicated in verse 5.

Further, on day six we read in verse 26a:

**And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.**

As stated, God created man in His own image. This occurred on day six of the creation. God rested on day seven. The word *God* in verse 1 is the Hebrew word *Eloheem*<sup>2</sup>, which implies an inherent multiplicity of the nature of the one true God. This fact, coupled with the “Let us” language of verse 26a, points to the truth that our one God has a multiple nature. The common reference to this is the Trinity: God the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Further, the language “Let us” clearly shows that God was not alone when the decision was made to make man. It is also worthy to note verse 27:

**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.**

God created man and woman as a single species called man. He created us in His own image, in His own nature.

The question would then be, how do we know the nature of God? Since man is made in the image of God, knowing the nature of God is the key to knowing the nature of man. This nature has to be the same. Surely, it is only a person that was with God in the beginning that could answer this question. As outlined in John 4:24, Jesus Christ revealed that God is a spirit. This declaration was made during a discussion with the woman at the well at Sychar in Samaria. And by examining the book of John, we know that Jesus was with God in the beginning.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**John 1:1**

**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.**

**John 1:14**

“Word,” as used here, is the Greek word *Logos*<sup>3</sup>, which by definition refers to Christ, the Messiah, the Divine Expression, Jesus Christ. Since Jesus was with God in the beginning, He can tell us with authority what the true nature of God is. So, as Jesus Christ declared:

**God is a spirit.**

**John 4:24a**

Man was made in the image of God, therefore we can clearly state that man is also a spirit.

The Hebrew word used for spirit in Genesis 1:2 is *ruwach*<sup>4</sup>. The same word in the Greek language is *pneuma*<sup>4</sup> as in Matthew 3:16. Both words refer to a wind-like state, or “*breath*”. The spirit, just like the wind, cannot be perceived by any of the four senses: sight, smell, taste or hearing. Unlike the wind, the spirit cannot be felt physically by our sense of touch. Yet, it is a powerful source of life. It is the real nature of man.

Let’s go back to the book of Genesis.

**And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.**

**Genesis 2:7**

Here we can see the steps God took to create man. He formed the body out of dust, like molding a statue from clay. At this point in

creation man was just a body. If God had stopped, man would be nothing but a lifeless statue . But God did not stop. He proceeded to the next step. God breathed into man the breath of life. This should show us that man is made up of more than just the human body. After God breathed *ruwach*, the breath of life, that is, the spirit, into man's nostrils, something happened. Man became a living soul. This means man is a spirit that lives in a body. Man is not just a lump of flesh. Man is a spiritual being.

Remember the earlier description of the spirit as being the *ruwach* (Hebrew) or *pneuma* (Greek) that cannot be seen, felt or heard? You might wonder how the spirit connects with the physical body if there is no way it can be contacted by the bodily senses. The Bible tells us how in a letter written by the Apostle Paul.

**And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:23**

Note the word “wholly,” which leaves nothing out, and then the breakdown of the components of the whole man into spirit, soul and body. In other words man's body as a whole is comprised of the spirit, the soul and the body. Here it is clearly stated that man is a spirit. Here we also read that man possesses a soul and lives in a body. Thus the soul acts as a bridge between the body and the spirit. It is the seat of man's emotions, mind and intellect. An oversimplified identity of the soul is the human brain, which controls the aforementioned functions of the soul. The spirit and the soul are closely intertwined. Both are sometimes referred to as a single unit called soul. It is important, however, to note that the soul and the spirit are separate entities with uniquely different functions.

The spirit is the real you. The spirit has one very important function that is worthy of special mention.

**The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.**

**Proverbs 20:27**

The spirit of man acts as a candle, therefore enlightening, or communicating to God. Again, God primarily communicates with man through the spirit as this verse in Proverbs tells us. Of course, God can communicate with man through the physical senses. However, we have no promise anywhere in the Bible that this will happen as a routine.

The spirit, just like the physical body, needs appropriate and adequate nourishment.

**...that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**

**Deuteronomy 8:3b**

**But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**

**Matthew 4:4**

A body without food would become weak and useless. Likewise, without proper nourishment, the spirit would starve. A starved spirit would become weak and useless, unable to properly connect with God. As the stated scriptures indicate, man's spirit is nourished through the reading and hearing of the word of God. And that should be on a regular basis. The word of God refers to the Holy Bible.

Sadly, the world is full of starved human spirits wandering about hopelessly. Some are crippled by fear, without vision and without direction. What a sad state to be in! As mentioned above, the primary reason for this deplorable state is that too many of us are ignorant of what our true nature is. Because of this lack of knowledge, we don't know how to nourish the most important component of our being. A famished spirit will remain unfulfilled regardless of an abundance of physical possessions. Such people are depressed, frustrated and hopeless because the person's spirit is not nourished. Fortunately, the physical body will tell us when it's hungry. Unfortunately, our spirit could be starved for years and we won't know it.

Of course, everyone is familiar with the components of the physical body to a large extent. Let's leave the grueling anatomical detail to the anatomists themselves and to the medical practitioners.

In summary, man is a spirit, possesses a soul and lives in a body. As the physical body is nourished with food, so also the spirit is nourished with the word of God. The soul is the bridge that connects man's spirit with the physical body. God communicates exclusively with man's spirit.

If your spirit has been starved, probably never fed at all, start feeding on the word of God today, and watch your life undergo a complete transformation. The Bible is not just a religious book. It is not just a storybook or one to decorate a house with. It is the food for the spirit. A spirit not fed with the word of God will eat anything. It will feed on the sinful practices of the world and anything that is within reach. The end result is what we have in the world today, absolute chaos.

Now that we know who we really are, we no longer have to be afraid. We can put an end to the hopelessness and fear that has crippled our lives for so long. Let's start feeding our spirit with the proper nourishment of the word of God. Only then will we be able to commune with God and live a fulfilled life. Start today.

## Chapter 2

# God's Purpose for Man

The Bible clearly indicates that God created man for His own glory and purpose.

**Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.**

**Isaiah 43:7**

**What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.**

**Psalm 8:4, 6**

His purpose for creating man has many facets which are outlined in this chapter.

### **1. For Fellowship:**

As we can clearly see in Genesis 1:26,

**And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them.....**

The primary purpose, as disclosed in the opening of this verse, is that of fellowship intertwined with love. God revealed His desire to make man, in an invitation that was expressed most likely to the members of the Trinity. This invitation indicates the highest degree of love that is humanly unfathomable. God could have stayed in heaven by Himself without bothering to create man and He would still be God. The Psalmist considered this issue and exclaimed:

**When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained;**

**What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.**

**Psalm 8:3-5**

A human analogy, which falls grossly short in comparison, would be a husband and his wife deciding to start a family of their own. Clearly a wife would not want to carry a baby in her womb for nine months, go through all the unpleasant bodily changes, all the stress of pregnancy, and go through all the pangs of childbirth only to leave the baby in the hospital and walk away. What happens under normal circumstances is that both parents rejoice with the birth of their child. In fact, everybody who is anybody rejoices along with the baby's parents. Under healthy circumstances, the (earthly) parents will want to develop a relationship with their child, one that will last a lifetime. Therefore, it's safe to say, the purpose for having a child is that of fellowship. Our heavenly father is not any different. When God said, "Let us make man," He showed every intention of bringing the man into a relationship with Himself. The man was to be an object of love, in continual fellowship with Almighty God.

Before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed this unrestricted, ongoing fellowship with God as evidenced by the following verses.

**And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou may freely eat:**

**Genesis 2:16**

**And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.**

**Genesis 2:19**



**And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.**

**Genesis 3:8**

Both Adam and Eve had unhindered access to God and were given direct instructions. Though they were given free access to eat of every tree of the garden, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden. Adam worked closely with God in naming the living creatures. It appears that Adam and Eve were able to see God in some fashion. They both hid from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden after they disobeyed by eating the forbidden fruit. More than likely, they saw where God stood. . Otherwise there was no way they could have attempted to hide from what they couldn't see.

Just like the earthly parents expect to meet the needs of their children, God also does the same. He meets every need of man. Adam was exceedingly blessed when he was created. He was practically given the entire world as a possession. Adam of course was the richest man that ever lived.

**And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.**

**Genesis 1:29**

God gave man total control of everything on earth.

**. . . and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.**

**Genesis 1:26b**

Imagine being the owner of every tree and being given control of all things on the face of the earth? You would be the richest man alive. This reflects the extent of love that God has for man. He has the same love for us now. God will meet every need of our lives if we get to know Him.

In addition to the ownership of the world, which Adam was given, he was placed in a specially planted garden, the Garden of Eden. Archeologists have tried fruitlessly to find the exact location of this garden. To date it has not been found.<sup>5</sup>

It could be argued that the Bible specifically described the location of Eden. A river was said to originate there. It watered the garden and then divided into four heads or branches: Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. Both the Euphrates and Hiddekel (Tigris) rivers exist today, located in present day Iraq. However, the rivers Pison and Gihon no longer exist. It is also interesting to note that God planted the garden eastward in Eden, indicating that the Garden of Eden was not the same as the place called Eden. The garden was only located in the east portion of Eden.

In view of the preceding facts we can deduce that the Garden of Eden, in addition to having a specific location, also had a special environment made specifically for Adam. This is an astounding revelation, that man was created to live in a specific environment, that in which God could maintain unhindered fellowship with man. After Adam and Eve committed the sin of disobedience and fell from grace, they were chased out of this environment and barred from ever entering it again.

**Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.**

**Genesis 3:23, 24**

And so it was, that man lost the environment, which was created for him. To fully understand the enormity of this situation, imagine a fish taken outside of its normal environment, water. That fish would be in great trouble. If placed on dry ground it would make frantic efforts to

wriggle its way back to the water. If the fish is unable to return back to the water, it inevitably dies. This is because a fish can only breathe air through water. To further drive the point home, imagine a bird, whose natural habitat is the sky. The bird is fine and healthy as long as it flies and stays in its normal environment. If someone grabs that bird and plunges it into water, keeping it completely submerged, that bird suffocates and dies. Why? Because a bird can only survive in the environment for which it was created; it can only breathe air through air.

Likewise, when man was chased out of the Garden of Eden, he died a spiritual death. That was when the travails of man began. Through the sin of Adam, we lost our natural environment of being in constant fellowship with God. Man died spiritually. With this spiritual death came the sinful nature, various diseases and physical death.

How could Adam have died and still lived for nine hundred and thirty years? The death as mentioned was a spiritual death. As outlined in the previous chapter, man's spirit, soul and physical body are separate entities that comprise the whole man. A spirit that is not connected with God is literally dead.

At this point, let's find out God's other purposes for creating man.

## **2. For God's glory:**

Man was created for God's glory.

**Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.**

**Isaiah 43:7**

Every thing in a man's life should be to the glory of God. Our actions should be such that brings honor to His name, being in agreement with the directives of the Bible.

**Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**

**Revelation 4:11**

### **3. For Work:**

Man was also created to work, to take care of the earth and all that is contained therein. It is interesting to note that the command to work was given to Adam prior to the fall. Contrary to what some might think, work is not a curse.

**And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.**

**Genesis 1:28**

**And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.**

**Genesis 2:5**

**And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.**

**Genesis 2:15**

Immediately after being created, Adam and Eve were given the task of replenishing the earth. They were commanded to subdue the earth and have dominion over the other creatures. In other words, work, work, and work. Further, the Holy Spirit revealed that at some point in the creation, the trees and herbs were not allowed to grow because there was no man to till the ground. God did not allow it to rain. The vegetation did not grow until someone was given the charge of taking care of it. This was clarified again in verse 15 of Genesis chapter two where God put the man in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

We can clearly see that God does not sanction idleness. Every man and woman is supposed to be engaged in work. In fact, it is the observation by medical practitioners that people with inactive lifestyle or those that don't work are prone to all kinds of illnesses. Such people are physically weak, mentally pathetic, are more likely to develop diabetes, obesity and a host of other ailments. Work is beneficial to the human body and not just for provision of livelihood. The body stays physically fit, the mind remains alert, and there is little space left to pursue unnecessary activities that waste time and produce trouble. "The idle hand is the devil's workshop."

#### **4. For the Exercise of the Will/Responsibility:**

Another purpose for man's creation is to learn responsibility. In verse 26 of Genesis chapter one God said, "...and let them have dominion..." In other words, let them be responsible. This responsibility relates to specifically stated duties. Man was given the dominion over other creatures, not over other men. No one should attempt to dominate another person. God did not give human beings that responsibility. Anyone that attempts to violate this precept seeks definite trouble, because it constitutes an absolute contradiction of the word of God.

The word *dominion* also means *will*. *Will* is the ability to make independent decisions and follow through with them.

**And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

**Genesis 2:16, 17**

Here it is again. Responsibility. However, this time it is coupled with the setting of limits and consequences of violation. Adam was given access to every tree of the garden. Imagine this: Adam had free access to the tree of life! He, along with Eve could have lived forever. They were free to eat from any tree they desired. Yet, they succumbed to the temptation of Satan. They ate the forbidden fruit. One wonders

why God specifically forbade Adam from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Remember that Adam was given dominion, *will*. This *will* in effect would be meaningless if there is nothing to exercise it on. God gave Adam an instruction, in order to make the granted *will* relevant. Adam of course decided to use the *will* in disobedience, and his action caused a curse to enter into the world. Adam apparently ate the fruit intentionally, as a step to redeem his wife, Eve. The spiritual death that came to Eve when she first ate the fruit would have produced a detrimental change in her that would have been obvious to Adam. As a type of Christ, Adam laid down his life, took the fruit from Eve and ate it, knowing the repercussion.

**For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.**

**I Timothy 2:13, 14**

Jesus Christ was referred to as the last Adam in that He laid down His life to redeem man from sin (I Corinthians 15:45). Nevertheless, Adam gave all the right of ownership of the world to the Devil. And so the world remains as it is today: corrupted with the influence of sin and Satan.

## Chapter 3

# Why is Life so Hard?

Life on this earth is warfare. Anyone that breathes can attest to the unending challenges people face on a daily basis. It can be boldly stated that life is hard. But why? Why is life hard? While teaching about trials, one eminent preacher in America made an awe inspiring statement: broadly speaking, people belong to three categories, those currently in a trial, those that are just getting out, and those that are about to enter into one.

Christians and non-Christians alike endure hardships daily. Everyone battles with the difficult challenges of daily living. Personal issues create undue stress. Finances, family relationships, work, and community issues create mental and physical strain. Not to mention national and international issues that affect everyone. The list is endless. Many hold the erroneous belief that no one is ever happy. Hmm, I wonder why?

An attempt to provide an answer to why life is hard would be futile. However, it is amazing to discover that the Bible not only provides the answer, but also guides everyone to the means of living above the circumstances of this life.

Firstly, as a result of Adam's disobedience, man died spiritually. Man got chased out of his natural environment of continual communion with God. Because of disobedience, man's spirit struggles to survive while isolated from God. The result is endless frustration that characterizes the human race today. Many suffer abject poverty, disease, ignorance, hopelessness and fear. Mental anguish is widespread as evidenced by the amazing numbers of people on all sorts of psychoactive drugs, both legal and otherwise, including alcohol and drugs. Consider this: young children are being treated for depression in the thousands. Not to mention the alarming rate of depression in the adult population as well. Depression is extremely common, with up to 30% of primary care clinic patients having depressive symptoms.<sup>6</sup> Attention Deficit Disorder as a diagnosis is rampant among the children, one that it is treated with addictive drugs that are not without undue side effects. What a deplorable situation.

Secondly, life is hard because we have been cursed. Due to Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience, God cursed the serpent (thankfully); He

cursed the woman; and He also cursed the ground for man's sake. It is interesting to note that God did not curse the man directly but indirectly by cursing the ground.

**And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.**

**Genesis 3:17-19**

Man in his natural state is operating under the curse. Frankly, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this out. Let's take a close look at Genesis 3:17-19. "*...In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread...*" This statement clearly reveals that prior to the curse, work was not a condition for man to have his needs met. Although man was given the responsibility of taking care of the earth and was commanded to work, the work was a unique, separate entity. It was simply an activity to be performed with fulfillment and enjoyment, without any frustrations. As a result of the curse however, work became laborious, tough, and full of drudgery. "*...in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . .*" As a result of the curse, work became a condition to man having his basic needs met.

**For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.**

**2 Thessalonians 3:10**

Before the fall of Adam in the garden, the prevailing conditions were the original plan of God. Work was a commandment. It was not an activity attached to any conditions. No sorrow was attached. As we can deduce from the scriptures, work was originally designed by God to be an enjoyable activity. Imagine one person naming all the living



creatures. Adam must have had a lot of fun performing this duty. He apparently sat, totally relaxed as the animals were *brought* to him. And whatever name he gave to any animal or plant simply stuck. No further questions.

Thirdly, the reason life is so hard is because the world was handed over to Satan. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he yielded his authority over the earth to Satan. The world as commonly used refers to the system of influence or authority on the earth, not the earth itself. It's hard to believe, but our forefather, Adam, gave away the world for the price of a fruit. That fruit must have been really special indeed. The end result was that the devil became the prince of this world. However, it should be emphasized that the devil does not actually own the earth itself. But, according to the scriptures, he does have ownership of the influence on the earth.

**Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.**

**John 14:30**

**In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

Christ referred to the devil as the prince (the ruler) of this world. Another reference to Satan is made by the Apostle Paul.

**In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

Satan deceived Adam and Eve in order to usurp the right to enter and operate in this world. The entrance of Satan brought sin, along with its grievous repercussions. Human nature and man's behavior became

polluted, so much so that God decided to destroy the world at the time of Noah.

**And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.**

**Genesis 6:5-7a**

Because of God's grace, Noah and his family were saved from the flood. Unfortunately however, the flood did not cleanse the earth of sin. Noah himself became drunk. His children got into idolatry. And here we are today: the world is still full of sin and its deleterious effects. One cannot help but wonder at the often barbaric behavior of men and women across the globe. The news is incessantly full of murder, rape and all kinds of unspeakable vices. There is corruption in high places. There are wars, ethnic cleansings, and tribal conflicts. Worldly philosophy permeates the thinking process of many. For instance, truth is being redefined as no longer being an absolute, just whatever seems right to an individual. The marriage institution is being destroyed. Homosexuality is openly practiced. Little wonder that the world is full of so much suffering and hardship—all is a result of sin.

For those that doubt the presence and authority of the devil in this world, let us consider the experience of Christ in the wilderness.

**Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.**

**Matthew 4:1**

**Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.**

**Mathew 4:8, 9**

The first scripture proves that the devil exists. The second scripture proves that the devil has authority over all the kingdoms of the world. The temptation proposed by Satan to Jesus Christ was to give the authority and glory of the kingdoms to Jesus. It's interesting to note Christ's response in verse 10. He did not contradict the devil's claim, intimating that Satan truly possesses what he was proposing to give away.

**Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

**Matthew 4:10**

The ultimate authority belongs to God Almighty. Jesus Christ addressed the devil in the above verse to indicate that he (the devil) is under ownership and shall worship the Lord God.

Also prominent is the fact that the devil has an intense hatred of man.

**And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.**

**Luke 10:18**

Satan was thrown out of heaven. Again, for reasons beyond human comprehension, Satan came to the earth, deceived Adam and Eve, and gained control of the world. A close contextual study of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, though a mere allusion to the mystical meaning, shows us that Satan or Lucifer was a highly regarded angel that became proud and was thrown out by God. The two chapters mentioned were prophecies of God's judgment against the enemies of Israel at that time in history.<sup>7</sup> These were namely: Babylon, Assyria, Palestina (the Philistines), Tyrus and Zidon. However, knowing that truth cannot exist in a vacuum, the allusion of the mystical meaning is substantial, though it is attached to what Israel's situation was at that period in time.

**How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!**

**For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.**

**Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.**

**Isaiah 14:12-15**

As mentioned, these verses contextually referred to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and his succeeding kings. However, there is a direct mention of the name of Lucifer or Satan, which cannot be ignored. Also obvious is the response of the Almighty to Lucifer's desire to overthrow God. It is clearly stated that Satan will be brought down to hell. These statements coincide with that made by Jesus in Luke 10:18. Jesus said He saw Satan fall from heaven at such a speed that was likened to lightning.

**Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God.**

**Ezekiel 28:12, 13a**

**Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.**

**Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.**

**Ezekiel 28:14, 17**

The "king of Tyrus", though a real earthly king is said to have been in Eden, the garden of God. This statement would be a reference to someone that was physically present in the Garden of Eden. In that

case, this person cannot be the then ruling king of Tyrus because there is no way he could have been in the Garden of Eden. This king is none other than Satan who was present in the garden. Further, a reference was made to “the anointed cherub” who is an angel, confirming the allusion that the verses point to an angelic being, the devil. Again, God said the devil would be cast to the ground. In other words, thrown out of heaven.

We can now understand why Satan hates man with such ferocious intensity. He used to be the preferred of God, the anointed cherub, dressed with precious stones. Satan was called son of the morning because of his brightness. He was thrown out of this position, though not without resistance. He fought with God’s angels, and lost.

**And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

**Revelation 12: 7-9**

**Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time.**

**Revelation 12:12**

Now this is the picture: Satan lost the position of being God’s favorite, and man was put in the position he left vacant. No wonder Satan is full of jealousy and madness at man. If you are born of a woman, Satan hates your guts. He will do everything in his power to hurt you, to ruin you, to destroy you.

**And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.**

**Revelation 12:13**

**And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

**Revelation 12: 17**

As revealed in verse 17, Satan has an intense hatred for the woman and her seed. Even worse, anyone that keeps God's commandments and has the testimony of Jesus Christ invokes double trouble from the devil. Frankly stated: *warfare*. Is this why Christians often face such a tough time in this world? More than likely.

The good news however, is that we do not have to panic. There is no reason to despair. We have victory in Jesus Christ.

**And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.**

**Revelation 12:11a**

All men are in a position to overcome the devil through Jesus Christ. As the foregoing verse stated, we overcome through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross for the remission of our sins; and by the word of God, the Holy Bible.

In conclusion, the world is a tough place because of the curse that resulted from Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Life is tough because of the loss of man's natural environment and constant communion with God, the loss of authority and ownership of the world to the devil, the fact that Satan lives here on earth, and finally because of Satan's vicious hatred for man out of jealousy of our position with God. And it doesn't matter whether one is a Christian or not, anyone that is born of a woman is hated by the devil. The enormous advantage Christians have is that they are guaranteed victory. Victory to overcome Satan by the blood of Christ and by the word of God.

## Chapter 4

# The Need for Salvation

A man who was well known for his dubious activities fell into the hands of the law. He was subsequently arraigned before the magistrate and received a well-deserved sentence. The man's mother was at the hearing. She broke down in tears, overwhelmed by the pronouncement of such a harsh punishment on her son. In a last frantic effort to obtain leniency, she cried aloud in the courtroom: "But my son is a born again Christian, he is not a criminal!"

This kind of situation, however queer it may sound, is seriously pathetic. There is a lack of seriousness attached to committing one's life to Jesus Christ. It makes one wonder, what the point is of being saved or born again? The statement, "I am born-again" or "I am saved," is often made so glibly, so fashionably that it ceases to carry any weight. Sometimes the people that make the statement don't appear to be any different from a common criminal as in the case illustrated above, both in speech and general lifestyle. To say one is born again seems to be meaningless in the society today. A Christian brother was once asked the question, "Are you born again?" His answer was, "Several times!"

In order to understand what it means to be born again, that is to have received salvation, the necessity for salvation has to be explained first and foremost. Salvation is not an insurance policy. This statement may be a shocking revelation to some, but it's true. Commonly, the decision for salvation emanates from an emotional response to an evangelistic message heard at a church service or a gospel meeting. Not uncommonly, the person listening to the message develops a fear of the eternal fire awaiting those that reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. A spurious decision is then made to agree with whatever the preacher says so this fire can be avoided. But as soon as such a person leaves the environment of the church or gospel meeting, the old lifestyle of sin is resumed almost immediately. With a false sense of security, that person will readily declare: I am born again.

Now, let's ask a pertinent question. Is such a person really saved? I doubt it. Someone that has truly been born again undergoes a life transformation that begins immediately when the person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The individual becomes a changed person.

Before this situation is addressed in detail, let's take a look at the issue of the need for salvation.

As we learned previously, Adam fell from a position of spiritual connection with God.

**But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

**Genesis 2:17**

Adam ate the fruit and died. Despite being spiritually dead, Adam continued living physically after he ate the fruit. In fact, Adam still lived for nine hundred and thirty years before his physical death. Spiritual disconnection from God is spiritual death. Obviously that is the case of the posterity of Adam—all are born into spiritual death.

**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.**

**Romans 3:23**

A crude analogy of spiritual death would be that of a rechargeable battery taken off its charging cradle. That battery, no matter how much electrical power it has stored up, is a dead battery if it has no way of ever being put back in the charging cradle. As long as the battery has access to the cradle that is connected to the prescribed power supply, it remains fully charged, ready to perform its function.

Thank God for not leaving the human race in the grievous situation of spiritual death. Remember that the reason for spiritual death is sin, the sin of disobedience. It is awesome to note that immediately when the curse was pronounced, God began the plan for reconciliation and saving man. God began the plan of salvation.

**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**

**Genesis 3:15**



The “seed” of the woman as stated above is a singular noun, representing Jesus Christ who will crush the head of the serpent, man’s enemy. Thus the serpent will be destroyed permanently, opening the way for man to be re-connected with God as Adam was in the beginning.

Therefore, we can see that God wanted the fellowship with man to be restored, but the original sin had to be atoned or paid for. Jesus Christ was the atonement for the sin of disobedience, the sin that all men inherited by birth through our forefather Adam.

**Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

**Isaiah 53:4-6**

**For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.**

**I Peter 3:18a**

We can recall from chapter two that God gave man free will. God will not violate it. Although the Bible clearly states that God wants all men to be saved, the decision for salvation is very much up to the man. Because of the will, man’s acceptance of salvation is entirely voluntary. God has designed it that way. Salvation is offered, not imposed. It is up to each person to accept or to reject it. It is all up to us.

**For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

**I Timothy 2:3, 4**

Due to man's will, salvation is totally voluntary. It is a priceless gift from God to the human race.

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**John 3:16**

Nonetheless, it is so appalling to see how many people reject the gospel of salvation, which is made freely available through Jesus Christ. The Bible describes such a stance as foolishness. It is unfortunate that the majority of people reject the gospel.

**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**

**Matthew 7:13, 14**

How can someone refuse eternal life in heaven? The salvation offer is unbeatable, since all it takes to get saved is to personally confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to do it with sincerity. It should be done out of true conviction. The confession is simple but serious, similar to taking an oath. By this means, the person is delivered from the chains of the devil and translated into the loving arms of Jesus Christ. How awesome is our God that He made the provision for everyone to be saved.

Clearly stated, there is a need for salvation, the voluntary acceptance of Jesus Christ into one's life. Christ paid a high price on the cross so that man could be re-connected spiritually with God. Jesus gave His life, His blood, to atone for man's sin. Accepting Christ's sacrifice on the cross for spiritual re-connection with God is what it means to be born again or to be saved.

**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the**

**dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

**Romans 10:9, 10**

Getting saved entails a person's confession of his/her inherent sinful nature. Then follows the conviction that Jesus Christ is the Savior from this bondage of sin. Also, that Christ gave His life on the cross and was resurrected three days later. Christ ascended to heaven; He is alive today and forevermore. Finally, the person gives a verbal confession of their belief in Christ; that Jesus Christ is Lord, and Savior. An individual thus voluntarily welcomes Christ into his/her heart and life. When this confession is made, the person gets saved or born again.

At the very moment of salvation, three spiritual things happen instantaneously. Firstly, the person's spirit is immersed or baptized into the body of Christ. This is a purely spiritual, one-time transaction. The process could be likened to a small piece of bubble gum (your human spirit) slapped into a single, infinitely much bigger, gargantuan ball of many small pieces of bubble gums (Jesus Christ) through the work of the Holy Spirit. Another analogy is that of a handful of snow (human spirit) being added to a large snowball (Jesus Christ), spiritually speaking. Please note that this baptism is entirely spiritual and is the fundamental baptism for all Christians at the moment of salvation.

**There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.**

**Ephesians 4:4, 5**

**For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.**

**I Corinthians 12:13a**

Baptism of the Spirit is not the same as water baptism. It is different and separate.

**I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.**

**Matthew 3:11**

Further, it is also entirely spiritual. The particular individual may or may not feel anything physically. The word “Ghost” in the King James Version of the Bible refers to “Spirit”.

In the book of Acts, we read that people believed in Christ and then were baptized as a public declaration of the believer’s faith in Him. Therefore, water baptism is a public statement of a saved person.

**Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?**

**Acts 10:47**

Secondly, the moment the confession is made with sincerity, the person’s spirit is sealed into the body of Christ, indicating that the transaction is irreversible. This guarantees eternal assurance of salvation. After the spiritual immersion into the body of Christ, that person’s spirit is locked in forever, so to speak.

**And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.**

**Ephesians 4:30**

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit moves in to reside within that saved person’s physical body.

**What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**

**I Corinthians 6:19**

**Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**

**II Corinthians 5:5**

Earnest means a guarantee, an assurance of being raised on the last day into eternal life. These three events illustrate the newness of a saved person.

Now let's go back to the issue that was raised at the opening of this chapter. How is it that a saved person can commit a crime? This is because a saved person is a conglomerate of the old nature and the new nature connected with the Holy Spirit. Man's will is still active and is the determining factor to one's actions. There is a continuous strife between the person's old nature and the Holy Spirit.

**For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.**

**Galatians 5:17**

Although a Christian can commit sin, such should be a rare occasion. Engagement in the sin should be more of an error, a mistake or a fall, rather than an intentional commitment. This is because it is impossible for a saved person to live a life of sin, now that the Holy Spirit dwells within that person's heart and mind. For example, it is possible that a Christian would yield to the temptation to lie. This is a sin, it is wrong. It should be confessed and forgiveness sought. However, that Christian would not run a crime ring. A person that does is probably not saved at all. As we can see in the above verses, if a person is truly saved, the indwelling Holy Spirit would not allow such a lifestyle of sin. On the contrary to a life typified by sin, any sincerely born again Christian has an unquenchable desire to live a holy life. Anyone that lives a life characterized by sin and yet claims to be a Christian is in need of a critical self-examination.

Now there is the forgiveness clause. If a Christian makes a mistake and falls into sin, forgiveness is freely available through confession and prayer.

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**I John 1:9**

Jesus Christ came to the world to pay the price of atonement and to spiritually reconnect man back to God—the position of God’s original design for man. Adam lost this position in the Garden of Eden. Any individual that has not taken the step of salvation is missing out on the whole essence of life. Nothing else can fill the void created by the spiritual death of man: not money, not sex, not drugs, not power. Only the reconciliation to God through Christ will suffice.

It is only the manufacturer that knows a product in and out. Likewise, it is only our God that knows who we are as men and women. Graciously enough, He has revealed His design for the human race to us in the Bible. Let us not be foolish enough to reject God’s plan of reconnecting us back to Himself through Jesus Christ. All we have to do is accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to obtain reconciliation. Jesus Christ is the one and only path there is, who puts man back in his natural environment, so that every man can attain the wholeness that all men seek but often fail to find.

**Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

**John 14: 6**

On another note, salvation enables the believer to understand the Holy Bible. The Bible is not just a spiritual book. The Holy Bible is a practical life manual. Imagine someone who has never seen a car before, someone who doesn’t know what a car is, how it operates, or how it is maintained. It would be rare for that person to just wake up one day, jump in the car and start driving. Not only will this person kill himself, but also scores of people along the way would be killed or injured. The car itself would be wrecked. Sadly enough, this analogy pictures exactly the approach most people take in life: living without instruction or practice. People make decisions by trial and error, utilizing the varied human experience or what somebody says on TV.

Life is much more complicated than driving a vehicle. Nonetheless, the majority of people are un-instructed about life. We just live day-by-day doing what we consider reasonable or logical at the moment. Critical decisions are made with our limited, ignorant reasoning. The end result: a sad, wretched, hopeless, worthless life is lived by many. A life of ignorance is a sure path to tragedy. No one has to live such a life. By reading the Bible, man can learn to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and get saved. The Holy Bible is man's life manual, the instruction book to life itself.

**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.**

**Psalm 19:7, 8**

“The law of the LORD,” “the testimony of the LORD,” “the statutes of the LORD,” and “the commandment of the LORD” all refers to the word of God—the Holy Bible. Perfection, assurance, wisdom, joy and enlightenment are found in the pages of the Bible. Anyone living without the enlightenment of the scriptures is blind. Thus, an attitude of seeking has to be the approach to Bible study. The right way to study God's word is not to skim through so many chapters a day to ease one's conscience. It is not for the entertainment of the biblical events. Nor is it to impress others with what we know.

The Holy Bible is a coded message. It is written to spirit filled, born again believers. Anyone can read through the Bible to obtain historical knowledge. However, only the sincerely born again Christians can understand the truth contained therein. Even the born again believers have to approach the Bible prayerfully and with the right motive. Otherwise the truth of the written word remains hidden. It is comforting to remember that God has made His Word freely available to all. So is salvation, which is necessary for a full comprehension of the Bible.

**That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being**

**enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.**

**Ephesians 1:17, 18**

The Apostle Paul prayed for the first century believers at Ephesus to be able to understand the word of God. Those believers did not have what we have today, the entire Bible in a single book. However, we today have the awesome privilege of access to the entire Bible.

This brings us to one of the most important revelations in this life. With the understanding of this revelation, days of hopelessness and despair can finally come to an end.

**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

**Philippians 4:19**

This is a promise of God as declared by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul. That God Himself will meet all your needs through Christ Jesus. According to the Gospel of John, in chapter one, Jesus Christ is declared to be the Word of God. Putting it plainly, God will meet the daily need of the believer through His Word, the Holy Bible.

Back to our previous discussion, there is a need for salvation to get hope. Saved Christians have the hope of eternal life. A hopeless life is a useless life: one that is not worth living. Someone that has a life pursuit and a hope for a better tomorrow will not engage in foolish activity. Recently, there was an incident reported in the news about an electrical power outage at a prominent city that occurred during a televised soccer game. The students at the local university went off campus to town, demanding gasoline to power an electrical generator so they could watch the game. Because the owner of the gas station refused to give out free gasoline, the university students got irate and started a riot. They used dangerous weapons and inflicted serious injuries on innocent people. Some lost their lives. If this horrible event happened with the common populace it would be bad enough, but imagine the act being perpetrated by university students! Such students don't understand the value of their own lives. They neither know what life is about nor do they know their purpose at the university. The act portrays



hopelessness at its worst. Such students have no hope of living decent life, they have nothing to live for. That is why it is easy to get dangerously irate over soccer or any other game. Soccer is definitely a great game in its place and is not the subject of this illustration.

Saved Christians have a hope for tomorrow, a hope for the future, and the hope of eternal life.

## Chapter 5

# Life of a Christian: Christianity Defined

Now we get to the crux of the matter. What is Christianity all about? It was the pagan people at Antioch that originally applied Christianity as a term to the followers of Jesus Christ during the first century. The believers were seen as Christ-like people. The term “Christianity” wasn’t commendatory at that time in history. Jesus Christ was given all kinds of derogatory names during the days of His ministry. Therefore, to be a Christian meant to be an odd fellow: to be moonstruck. Moreover, some practices of Christianity were grossly misinterpreted. Most notable among these is the communion that was wrongly labeled cannibalism.

Following the trend of this book, the reader can readily define a Christian as that individual that has made a willful decision to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. A Christian is a person that enjoys the sweet communion with Almighty God on a regular basis. In essence, Christianity refers to the life and practice of a true Christian.

Then some questions come to the surface. What does the life of a Christian entail? If heaven were such a beautiful place and is the guaranteed destination of Christians, why would they want to live here on earth? Why not just get saved and proceed straight to heaven? So, let’s closely examine the life of a Christian as outlined in the scriptures in an attempt to find an explanation.

After salvation, the ensuing life of a Christian is that of sanctification, chastisement and work, all based on a foundation of prayer. Now let’s look at these separately and in detail.

### Sanctification:

There are two forms of sanctification: ecclesiastical and personal. Ecclesiastical separation relates to the church being set apart from other entities like the government. With personal separation, the believer is set apart. This is a progressive removal from the old life that the person used to live, to a new life in Christ. It is a life-long process of two

simultaneous events. As noted previously, there is a gradual removal of the individual from the world system that is typified by its sinful, corrupt nature. Concurrently, the believer is introduced into the new lifestyle of the kingdom of God. Each individual believer is gradually changed into the image of Christ.

**For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.**

**Romans 8:29a**

Sanctification is the focus of chapter eight in the book of Romans. Verse 1 opens with the declaration that there is no condemnation to them that are saved, in Christ Jesus. Such people live not after the flesh, which is the old sinful nature; but after the Spirit through the word of God, the Bible. The separation refers to the life lived daily. For example, a believer would stop living a life typified by corruption: lying, forgery, stealing, bribery, practice of hedonism, and the like. Such a person would gradually pursue a life of holiness.

Vital to this process of sanctification requires an active role. Every new Christian needs biblical instruction. Unless a person is born into a Christian family and taught the Bible as a child, most people who give their lives to Christ as a teenager or young adult are totally ignorant of the teachings of the Bible. The situation would be even worse for those that get saved as a grown adult. Most are already set in their ways. It takes time to discover the truth of God's word. It takes even more time and effort to live up to His standard. Being born again into Christianity is like being born as a baby into a new life. In order to be nourished and grow, one has to study the Bible fervently.

**As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.**

**I Peter 2:2**

**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

**II Timothy 2:15**

It is noteworthy that the keyword is to study, not just read. There are people that can read fast enough to finish reading the entire Bible in two to three weeks. Although that is commendable, it would be just reading, or skimming, not studying. There is a difference between the two. In fact, for an in-depth study of the Bible, a conservative estimate would be at least three years of effort, assuming the person studies a chapter a day. A recommended way to accomplish this is to read the Bible along with a carefully chosen Bible commentary like Matthew Henry's Commentary.<sup>8</sup> It is definitely laborious, but it is rewarding. Mind you, this is the one single activity that will make a significant difference in a Christian person's life. What is more, God promises to reward anyone that studies and obeys His word.

**Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.**

**Psalms 19:11**

As discussed previously, it is important to bear in mind that God's word (referred to as "them" in above verse) is food to the human spirit. Everyone eats regular food on a daily basis to nourish the physical body. Therefore, the believer needs to feed on the word of God, which is the spiritual food to nourish the spirit.

**Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**

**Deuteronomy 8:3b**

Failure to feed the spirit results in spiritual starvation. The detrimental effects of a starved spirit would eventually become manifest in the physical body. Remember, man is a spirit that lives in a body.

This brings us to the issue of spirituality, a term that is so commonly misunderstood. It is such an important word that it should be carefully studied and used appropriately. Being spiritual is a status applied to serious Christian individuals. And that's okay. The problem is that we all look at the outward effects to determine who is a serious

Christian and who is not. Some smart characters dress the part and speak perfect Christianese, yet those same individuals engage in sinful activities that would blow one's mind. Some attend every single church service. Some engage in several church activities. Yet if you look closely at their lives, you will surprisingly find a horrible, hateful personality. Simply put, such a person puts up a façade of a well-dressed tomb, which is full of dead men's bones on the inside.

So we should be careful with this term spirituality. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that spirituality does not denote seniority. It is not based on how long someone has been a Christian or has been attending a particular church. Neither is it based on knowledge of the scriptures. Anyone saved or unsaved can memorize the Bible and quote verses effortlessly. For instance, David Koresh, the late leader of the Branch Davidian cult, was reported to have had a phenomenal memory of scriptural texts.<sup>9</sup> Even Satan quoted scriptures while he tempted Jesus Christ.

Further, a person that thinks himself/herself to be spiritual is probably not. What then is spirituality?

**Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**

**Galatians 6:1**

Apostle Paul implored the Galatian Christians to restore a brother with the spirit of meekness, a spirit of being subject to the word of God. Stated in another way: obedience to God's word. Those that were spiritual were instructed to restore a fellow brother who was at fault back into spirituality or obedience. A careful study of the verse in context (Galatians 5:18 to Galatians 6:10) would further support this inference.

Spirituality is evidenced by a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in a believer. Although some of the components of the fruit of the Spirit could be faked, it would be impossible to fake the whole package.

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

**Galatians 5:22, 23**

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make someone spiritual. In a spiritual person, the Holy Spirit would manifest the complete fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. All nine virtues manifested in a single person at the same time.

Therefore, a person's spirituality is based on nothing else but a sincere obedience to God's word. Nothing else would suffice. Of course to be obedient you would have to know what to be obedient to. This again underscores the importance of studying the Bible regularly. Out of obedience comes the maturity, the gradual transformation into the very image of Jesus Christ Himself.

An integral part of sanctification is church membership. Going to a church obviously does not make someone a Christian, in much the same way that going to a stadium does not make someone a professional soccer player. Christians go to church out of obedience to the word of God.

**Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**

**Hebrews 10:25**

Furthermore, utmost caution should be exercised in choosing a church to join. Anyone going to a restaurant would do some basic research into what the restaurant offers. Most people would not just walk into any restaurant and ask the waiter/waitress to serve anything edible. People typically drive considerable distance to get the right food at the right place. The choice of a church should be given even greater consideration. A common saying is that there is no perfect church. Although this statement is true, there is such a thing as the right church. Such as one that teaches and practices God's word accurately and with

sincerity. The name on the door is of less significance, it is what is taught and practiced inside the building that matters.

Finally, sanctification entails perseverance. The changes in a believer's life come at a price. Old friends are lost. Some face rejection by their own families. Some lose their jobs. Some become castaways. However, no matter what it takes, the believer has to persevere. We have the promise that Jesus Christ our Lord will never leave or forsake us. And God is faithful.

**And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.**

**Mark 10:29, 30**

## Chastisement

This is by no means an easy subject, neither to discuss nor to experience. It does not feel good. Nevertheless, according to the scriptures, it is a requirement for all believers. Although the extent of the chastisement depends on the individual being chastised, the greater weight depends on the chastiser himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. The timing, severity and duration are all up to Him.

**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.**

**Revelation 3:19a**

It is the testimony of many believers that before they were born again or got serious in their walk with Christ, life was a smooth sail. Now that they've become Christians and are involved in activities for the kingdom of God, things have turned haywire. Is this the reason many Christians seem to be laden with problems? Maybe so. Is it a punishment for sin? Definitely not. It is the training school for those that truly want to serve the Lord.

**My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?**

**Hebrews 12:5b-7**

Every serious believer experiences at least one chastening in a lifetime. In fact, for most, it is probably more than once. The good news is that chastening does not last forever. It is for the purpose of maturing the believer and the calling out for responsibility.

**Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.**

**Isaiah 48:10, 11**

If one is currently facing chastisement, they should be joyful. They are beloved of the Lord. They are being prepared for something greater.

So what is the source of these challenges that Christians face? This fact may surprise some, but they do not come from God.

**For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.**

**Lamentations 3:33**

But the question still remains. If the chastening does not directly emanate from God, where does it come from?

**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

**James 1:17**



**There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.**

**I Corinthians: 10:13**

With brutal self-examination, many of us will make an amazing discovery: that we are often the source of the difficulties that come into our lives. We invite trouble through ignorance, bad choices, and sometimes a straightforward defiance to the word of God. It is not God that forces us to get married to that man in disregard of our friends and parents' objections. God did not make us ignore our family to pursue a vain career, however lucrative the career may have seemed. God did not make us engage in an extra-marital affair. It is not God that made us sign the contract to buy a house that we cannot afford, which eventually lead to bankruptcy. God did not make us eat all that food to the point that we can hardly walk. God did not make us smoke those cancer sticks called cigarettes . . . .

Nonetheless, when the repercussions catch up, we tend to blame everything on God. Or worse still, we want to put the blame on the devil and absolve ourselves of the responsibility. As the scriptures show in James 1:17, bad things come from below, meaning the world's influence, the devil, and most notably, human beings. Let's face it: of these three adversarial sources mentioned, we are our own worst enemies. A soldier once exclaimed, "We have found the enemy, it is us!"

Some of us do things to ourselves that are simply appalling. We obey our sinful nature and make bad choices. Undoubtedly, God allows us to carry out our will. He allows these circumstances to happen in our lives. He could prevent us from such mistakes, but in His infinite wisdom, He allows these circumstances to occur. Ultimately, what God does with these situations is teach us, and if we love Him, He will turn them around for our benefit. The object is to learn. Though going through difficult times is not the best way to learn, a person that learns through such a circumstance is a wise person. Failure to learn disqualifies a person from the awesome privilege of serving the Lord in an appreciable capacity. Mind you, God has nothing to lose if a particular brother or sister refuses to learn. Life will simply whip the

worst ill on such a person. And remember, God has billions of people to choose from to carry out His assignments.

Without question, circumstances are not the best way to learn. It is much better and much more painless to learn through pre-information, especially by studying the Bible. It is better for one to desire the sincere milk of the word in order to grow thereby (I Peter 2:2), rather than to make mistakes that hurt and possibly take years to recover from, if ever at all.

During the chastening period, a believer is urged to endure in subjection to God and not to be miserable by crying, “Why me?” as many do.

**Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.**

**Hebrews 12:12, 13**

The chastening period is also a time of critical self-examination, followed by self-correction. Whatever was the wrong practice in a person’s life should be corrected. If applicable, it should be stopped. If a person examines himself/herself and identifies nothing, that is fine. Even if that is the case, a time of chastening is an excellent opportunity to get closer to God through prayer, Bible study and spiritual growth.

**Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.**

**Hebrews 12:11**

The end result of chastening is an awesome state, one to be desired by all. Our heavenly Father deals with the chaste believer as a son. What a privileged position that is!

Be that as it may, no one in a right state of mind would pray for a trial in order to receive chastening. Let me say once again: it doesn’t feel good. Life is hard enough without any chastening or trials. Walk

uprightly before God and be obedient to His word, He will accomplish His design for your life at the right time.

Further, it is important to note that for a believer, the issue of willful sin is totally different. When a believer goes out by design to commit sin, for example adultery, God himself executes judgment directly. An instance would be that of David. Despite his close relationship with God, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then married her after killing her husband, Uriah. God stepped in directly to execute judgment.

**Thus said the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.**

**2 Samuel 12:11, 12**

A believer has to exercise extreme caution not to commit intentional sin. It falls beyond the realm of chastisement. It is the worst thing that can happen to anyone because there is no atonement for such trespass. It attracts stiff penalties although a New Testament believer doesn't lose his/her salvation.

**For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.**

**Hebrews 10:26, 27**

It is true that New Testament Christians live under the dispensation of grace. But, let us be careful not take the grace of God as an occasion to sin.

**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

**Hebrews 10:31**

**See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.**

**Deuteronomy 32:39**

## Work

The issue of work has been dealt with previously but now will be re-examined as it relates to the believer. God ordained work prior to the curse. Work did not come as a result of the curse. In fact, before Adam was created, God did not allow it to rain so the plants could grow because there was no man to manage the earth.

**And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.**

**Genesis 2:5**

The LORD God assigned responsibilities to Adam and Eve right after they were created. Both of them were supposed to work. This precept still applies to everyone today. In fact, as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in II Thessalonians 3:10, if any does not work, neither should he eat. Being a Christian is no excuse for laziness. In fact, Christians should be better than non-believers by being hard workers: punctual, reliable and insightful at their jobs.

From observation, it appears that many believers go through a stage in their Christian walk when the scriptural revelations start to really sink in. They study the Bible and feel connected to God, probably for the first time. Sadly enough, many misinterpret such a period in their lives to mean they are being called to the ministry. This error is especially rampant amongst men but not limited to them. Some have been known to make the big mistake of leaving their jobs to join themselves to an ordained minister as an assistant. Imagine a well-trained medical doctor in the prime of his life, abandoning his much

needed vocation to become an assistant pastor at a church. A well-established businessman abandons all his investments to become a pastor. In spite of the passing emotional satisfaction and the transient praise this bad move may earn, the motive is questionable. If the motive is wrong, the action is wrong, no matter how good it looks on the surface. Frankly, much of these actions stem from our fleshly, covetous nature; we oftentimes lust after what someone else has, especially if it is perceived as good. We do not all have to be ordained ministers to serve God. In fact, most of the people called by God were those that excelled in their trades, not those seeking the easy life or cheap recognition. The apostle Paul is a notable example. He worked as a tent maker to make a living while on his missionary journeys.

**And labour, working with our own hands.**

**I Corinthians 4:12a**

If we apply common sense, imagine all believers becoming pastors. Who would plant the crop for food? Who would build houses for shelter and maintain them? Who would attend the sick? Or maintain security? Or build the roads? And so on. This is not to say pastors are not needed. Of course pastors are necessary and are called of the Lord Jesus. Those that are called to ministry as a pastor or to any other full-time ordained capacity know it in their hearts. And by their fruits you shall know them.

Notably, our Lord Jesus Christ already ordained all believers anyway. We should all be doing the work of ordained ministers for the kingdom while gainfully employed in our different, often secular vocations.

**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**

**John 15:16**

Therefore, in addition to our secular vocations, we should all be actively engaged in the work that we are called to by our Lord Jesus Christ. That work is outlined in the following verses.

**And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

**Mathew 28:18-20**

**And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.**

**II Corinthians 5:18**

All born-again Christians are given the responsibility of preaching the gospel. Jesus Christ Himself appointed all believers to the ministry of getting unbelievers reconciled to God. This duty could and should be effectively accomplished while actively involved in our different secular vocations. As a matter of fact, a serious believer should expect to win more souls to Christ while engaged in an ordinary job that affords normal contact with people in the secular world. The pastor of a church is not supposed to go out to win souls. That is not the job of the pastor. The church members should go out into their daily vocations and win souls to bring back to the church. Any pastor will admit to the difficulty of winning souls by themselves. The moment the identity of a pastor is revealed, most unbelievers start behaving “holy” or put up an invisible, impenetrable wall around themselves, thus blocking the prospect of being exposed to the gospel.

In the legalistic world of today, it may be a daunting challenge for a believer to witness Christ at the work place. Each believer should study Matthew chapters nine and ten and exercise caution in witnessing. You do not want to lose your job or actually hinder the cause of Christ by being careless. However, the least any believer should do in the workplace is lifestyle witnessing. This includes but is not limited to graceful words, wearing appropriate dress, carefully speaking out

against sin, and so on. Gospel tracts can be given out in a non-confrontational fashion. Eventually someone will notice a difference in the believer's behavior and ask questions. This will then be a golden opportunity to witness Christ. In other words, the believer should be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.

Christians are the salt of the world.

**Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men.**

**Matthew 5:13**

Salt is a preservative used for meat, fish and other food items. For example, a hog farmer in the western world would typically slaughter an animal, dress it and then rub salt into the meat until it's saturated with it. The carcass would be prepared in the fall and simply hung outside the farmhouse. The resulting salt cured ham, a delicacy in a class of its own, remains preserved and available to eat throughout the winter, without need for refrigeration.

Likewise, in the developing countries where access to electricity is limited and refrigerators are not common household items, food is preserved with salt. Fish is such an example that is preserved by salting and drying in the open air. The salted fish lasts months despite the hot, humid weather and the overabundance of flies.

This is the exact analogy that our Lord Jesus Christ used to describe Christians. Believers are given the important responsibility of being the salt of the earth, of being the preservative. Without the influence of Christians, the world would be a complete mess, like some countries are experiencing already. Christians have to perform this all-important duty of being the earth's preservative by speaking out against evil practices in society. Furthermore, Christians should not participate in any societal norm if it contradicts God's word. Believers should never accept bribes, should not lie or get entangled in the cunning craftiness of receiving unearned gain, as is the practice of some worldly people.

Is failure in this duty of being the salt of the earth why things are so bad in some countries, notably Africa? In these countries, scores of people claim to be Christians amidst the moral bankruptcy of society. One wonders if all those individuals know what they are talking about.

It is doubtful if such people are anything close to being a Christian. If there are truly enough Christians in any society, such that know their duties and are loyal to the word of God, the results should be readily notable. The society would be palpably different.

This duty of being the salt of the earth might be one of the most difficult tasks assigned to the believer by the Lord Jesus, and probably the least obeyed. It carries along with it instant persecution. It comes at a high price. Some may even lose their lives. But should the fear of persecution by the world outweigh the fear of the Lord? Definitely not! Believers made a total life commitment when they confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

**He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.**

**Matthew 10:37-39**

Since obedience is the key to many promises given to us by Our Lord, let us not fear the powers of this world. Let us fear Him that has called us unto salvation. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us, so let us be bold in the performance of the duties assigned to us.

Consider this, if Christians keep quiet and let Satan have his way, the populace and the posterity will suffer unduly, unnecessarily and eventually be consumed anyway. So why not pay the price of duty now and avoid future sorrows? Remember that God doesn't live here on earth with us. We reap the fruit of whatever we sow. If believers continue to be timid, if they continue to fold their hands and be mute in the face of atrocities committed by society, it may come to a point that organized worship will be hindered. Going to a church or living the life of a Christian will be impossible. So let us not fear, let us be bold in confronting evil in society so that we don't end up suffering for it, and being a disappointment to the One that called us into liberty.



## Chapter 6

# What Christianity is not – Rabbit Trails

The Christian walk is a serious one. An analogy would be walking a tight rope; a careful, focused, dedicated venture. The Apostle Paul warned the first century believers:

**Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.**

**Philippians 2:12b**

It is always intriguing to watch a ropewalker on a tight rope, whether on the television or at a local circus event. We see intense concentration on the face of the character performing the feat. Nothing else seems to matter: the cross bar is held cautiously, every step is taken with utmost vigilance, and the focus is maintained until the end of the rope is reached and the feat completed.

This ropewalker analogy describes the Christian walk from beginning to end. If a single step is missed at several feet in the air with hard concrete floor beneath, you can only imagine the tragedy that would follow. Unfortunately, many Christians fall from their walk, not being careful enough to know the pitfalls, being uninformed of how to avoid them and failing to keep their focus until the end. The tragedy of the walk for many Christians is like the proverbial farmer who left the farmhouse to harvest corn but never got to his destination for pursuing rabbit trails along the way.

Let us examine some of the common pitfalls to the Christian walk.

### Legalism

The trickiest pitfall for Christians is probably that of legalism, often described as “pharisaism” or simply “religion.” By definition, legalism is the belief that work earns righteousness before God. This is a sad distraction and a really sad one indeed because it mostly affects serious

Christians. Non-serious, lazy, good-for-nothing believers have no problem whatsoever with legalism. It may be part of the fallen human nature that a reward is expected after the performance of a duty. When a Christian starts to take God seriously, studying the Bible, knowing right from wrong, actively witnessing, serving at church, praying, interceding for others and maybe fasting, there follows a natural feeling of self worthiness before God. However, no one deserves anything from God. It is only by His grace that He blesses anyone. Further, the price paid by Jesus Christ on the cross is enough for our righteousness. No one has to supplement that which God has accepted as the only price for our salvation.

**He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.**

**Isaiah 53:11**

Any time the performance of a duty becomes the basis of our relationship with God, such a person has lapsed into legalism. Again, it is sad to observe how many Christians suffer the repercussion of this (almost) technical fault. And as mentioned before, only the serious Christians fall prey most often. Would God punish legalism? It appears so, and probably severely. Moses paid a high price in the wilderness for violating a divine principle, which only someone of his status could be punished for. He was barred from entering the Promised Land for elevating himself to God's status and striking the rock twice when he should have obediently talked to the rock. On occasion, believers attain considerable status at their local church, which they are not willing to let go. Everything seems to revolve around being the head usher or the Sunday School Teacher. The serving capacity is held onto with vicious intensity. The church better not ask anyone else to perform that duty, or look out, there's trouble.

Some sincerely work hard to get their local church developed to a certain degree, and then start to have a feeling of ownership. A level of loyalty to the local church develops that seems to compete with the loyalty to Jesus Christ. The church ends up being worshipped instead of God who owns the church. Some would prefer to stay jobless rather

than take a job in another town that would necessitate leaving their favorite church and joining another.

Along with the fault of legalism comes that of seniority profiling or ranking among members of a local church or group of churches. Jesus Christ gave a stern warning to His followers not to become masters. There is only one master, and He is Jesus Christ Himself.

**But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.**

**Matthew 23:8**

All believers in the body of Christ have the same status. And God is not a respecter of persons. Jesus Christ illustrated this point in the parable of the householder sending out laborers into his vineyard. Although some worked more hours than others, they all received the same pay at the end of the day.

Nevertheless, a believer that realizes he's being legalistic only needs to repent. God will not cast away His own children forever. A true repentance is always accepted by our heavenly Father.

## Judgmentalism

Judgmentalism should not be confused with legalism. It is a state of expecting more from others compared to oneself. Christ warned against this error.

**Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?**

**Matthew 7:1-3**

Every Christian should hold himself/herself to a higher spiritual standard and let God be the judge of any person perceived to be deficient in a particular area. No one knows the mind of another person. Thus we should all refrain from judging others especially when it comes to judging motives. An external action may be so deceptive it tempts wrong conclusions. Only God knows the heart and He is the ultimate judge. A word of caution is not to confuse the judging of motives with judging sin. Sin should and must be judged. Sin should not be tolerated under any circumstance.

## Intellectualism

Next to consider is the pitfall of intellectualism. This is common among the educated folks, the erudite and scholarly. Such folks bring intellectual reasoning of the world into the interpretation of the Bible, and consequently, the Christian's life. This is also a sad pitfall. According to reports, it seems to be the foundation of many seminaries where pastors and other church leaders receive their training. Undue emphasis is laid on studying *about* the Bible, studying the circumstances surrounding the events of the Bible, and focusing on what professor so-and-so said *about* the Bible that the Bible itself ends up being studied little if at all. The focus of study ends up being about God but not to know God.

Human intellect does not have the capacity to study God. The reason is that God is infinite, while humans are finite. There are many things God did in the Bible that are simply beyond human comprehension. There are things that God commands believers through Bible that we cannot explain or intellectualize in physical terms. We just have to walk with God in pure faith. For example, God instructed the Israelites to get the priests to blow trumpets whenever they went to war. Why? It's beyond human comprehension. Someone attacking them with chariots, bows and arrows and all they should do is blow a trumpet? It sounds like a death sentence to human reasoning. But this is what God commanded. Those among the Israelites that were obedient enjoyed miraculous victories to God's glory.

All the miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ were simply that: miracles. They cannot be explained by human intellect.

**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

**Romans 12:2**

Paul appealed to the first century Christians at Rome to change their mindset, to practically throw out what they used to know, not to limit themselves to their intellects, but to operate their lives solely on what God can do in their lives based on His power. God Himself said through the prophet:

**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**Isaiah 55:8, 9**

A base form of intellectualism is the belief that the scriptures are supposed to be memorized and vainly regurgitated. Many quote the Bible with such emptiness, probably thinking someone else would be impressed by how much knowledge of the scriptures they possess. The Bible is supposed to be lived, not just recited. A sect leader at age twelve was said to have been able to recite the entire New Testament from memory. Yet he ended up in cultism, polygamy, defiance of the government, and ultimately conducted a mass suicide.<sup>9</sup> Christians do need to exercise caution even in the area of memorizing scriptures. It is definitely right to memorize scriptures and all Christians should do this. However, it should be done with the right motives.

## Profiteering

In these days of rapid results and overnight wealth, there are Christians who fall into the temptation of profiteering from the faith. The health and wealth doctrine, though truly scriptural is commonly abused. Surely, the Bible is full of many amazing promises. Wealth and health are unquestionably very important to our daily lives. However,

wealth by itself is not the primary focus of Christianity, as we have seen in our discussions so far. It is a fringe benefit of being obedient to the Lord. On the contrary, Christians do not have to be poor and sick, God's word does not support that.

Christianity is big business these days. There is probably no better business than that which exploits and manipulates human emotions. When emotion is involved in anything, people become unreasonable. We all do things just because we want to. Of course, the clever folks see that, and knowing it's a gold mine, they go in for the kill. In some cases, starting a church is likened to a personal business. It is apparent that God allows profiteering from the Christian faith. True believers who fear God won't fall for this temptation of profiteering from Christianity. It is wrong. Believe it or not, judgment is coming to those that are guilty of this sinful practice.

## Spiritism

We have seen that man is a spirit that lives in a body and possesses a soul. Man by nature has an innate, unquenchable desire to pursue spiritual fulfillment. The underlying reason would be the burning need to connect back to our creator spiritually. Along with the desire comes the recognition over the ages that there is more to this life than what meets the eye. Spiritism is probably as old as man, dating back to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

Among Christians in many places in the world, spiritism has been substituted for spirituality. Clearly, spiritism is the worship and invoking of evil spirits. Evil spirits are real. They are the fallen angels that were originally created and given abilities, abilities that humanly speaking, are supernatural. Satan is the head of the evil spirits. Himself (Satan) and his angels were cast out to earth from heaven as we read in Revelation 12:7-9. Fortunately, they cannot legally operate in this world unless human beings give them permission. Adam gave the first permission: ceding over the control of the world to Satan. Yet, the evil spirits cannot operate in the earth realm without a physical body, without flesh and blood.

**Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

**John 3:5, 6**

The foregoing verse alludes to the principle that evil spirits cannot operate here on earth without man giving them permission, although the verse has a different contextual meaning. To forestall any arguments, I will state again that it is merely an allusion but it is an amazing truth. Unless an evil spirit possesses a body, be it human, animal or an inanimate object like a tree, a house or an idol, it remains powerless.

The story is told in the gospels of a man with an unclean spirit dwelling among the tombs. The spirits recognized Jesus as He and the disciples passed by. The spirits spoke through the possessed man.

**But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, what is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.**

**Mark 5:6-9**

**And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.**

**Mark 5:15**

Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man, and as soon as this happened, the man became normal, clothed and in his right mind. He stopped crying and cutting himself with stones. The evil spirits asked Jesus' *permission* to be sent into the swine. The pigs drown as a result of the ensuing possession.

Being spirits, the devil and his angels have supernatural capabilities. The evil powers of the idols that are evident in various

parts of the world are real. The carved pieces of wood, the cast iron or brass are obviously powerless by themselves. It is the evil spirits that men allow to dwell in those objects that are responsible for evil feats. Never question the evil ability of these idols and their priests. The good thing is they cannot do anything to you unless you permit it. Permission could be granted through fear, through intimidation or through ignorance. A person could inadvertently be indoctrinated into a cult by any of these means.

It baffles the mind to see well educated, supposedly sophisticated Christians succumb to the fear of idols by yielding to societal pressure in this regard. Professors of science carry amulets on the body for protection. Some go from the church after Sunday worship to the witchdoctor to perform idol rites, while clutching the Bible under their arm.

This evil has to stop. People cannot worship God and the devil simultaneously. People can go to the oracles if they like, but they cannot blend idol worship with that of the Lord God. The two are mutually exclusive.

**There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.**

**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**

Anyone practicing any of these abominations is being wooed into the world of evil spirit possession. When anyone consults these idols, such a person's spirit opens itself for evil spirit possession. So what starts as the so-called "entertainment" of seeking to know the future, falsely denoted as prophecy, ultimately culminates in disastrous consequences of evil spirit possession. When a person is possessed of an evil spirit, the spirit violently takes over that person's life: his thoughts, actions, everything. If God in His infinite mercies does not intervene, possession by evil spirit(s) is an irreversible process. It took



Jesus Christ Himself to deliver the man described above from the control of the evil spirit.

There is probably nothing of more serious consequence for the unwary believer in this earth realm than involvement in spiritism. A believer that reads the zodiac signs for any reason is asking for trouble. Consulting a psychic is even worse. Careless seeking of prophecy is probably the strongest bait of the devil to seduce the naive believer. *Divination* is wrongly called *prophecy* by society. Any person or church that practices divination is opening itself to destruction. Saul, the first king of Israel, consulted a witch for divination and lost both his kingdom and his life. It should be reiterated again: divination is not prophecy. There is no single promise in the Bible of knowing tomorrow.

**Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**

**Matthew 6:3**

This doesn't mean not to plan for tomorrow or not to have a vision for tomorrow. It simply means not to go about seeking to know what will happen tomorrow and destroy the joy of living today. As our Lord Jesus Christ stated, the challenges of today is enough. Live one day at a time. Never consult oracles or wizards, or the zodiacs. Violating God's instruction in this area is a sure trap for self-destruction.

Divination is not, repeat, not the same thing as prophecy. God, at His discretion has in the past revealed future events through different prophets. He can still do the same today. However, God asked New Testament believers to live by faith, not by divination.

**For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.**

**Romans 1:17**

In this present age and dispensation, God does not routinely communicate with believers through prophetic utterances any more.

**God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.**

**Hebrews 1:1, 2a**

God speaks to this generation through His Son Jesus Christ, who according to John chapter one is the Logos, or the Word, the Holy Bible. God wants us to live by His Word. If any believer wants prophecy regarding any issue, such a one should search the scriptures. Every possible issue on this planet is covered in the Bible. There is no problem that cannot be solved through the wisdom of the Word of God.

**Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.**

**Revelation 1:3**

**And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

**Revelation 22:19**

The emphasis is on the word *prophecy*. It is used in reference to the word of God. The prophecy is the word of God, the Holy Bible. Prophecy, as used in these verses, does not imply divination. The evil spirits operate divination very tactfully: mainly through the pagan oracles and the current day metaphysics. There are things like soul travel, spell casting and a bunch of other devilish practices, some of which produces material effects that can be seen. But if you examine such things closely, something is amiss. Television psychics call divination “entertainment.” Not so! There is no one that would cut his/her own throat with a sharp knife and call it entertainment.

Spiritism should be avoided at all costs, no matter what the world calls it. It is destructive, an abomination to the most high God.

## Sin

Man has a corrupt, sinful nature as a result of Satan's entrance into the world.

**And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

**Genesis 6:5**

Every believer has to realize that the sinful nature does not disappear at salvation. What happens is that the Holy Spirit moves in and the believer becomes a new unit comprising the old nature and the new Spirit. Both remain active and constantly in conflict. The believer should yield more and more to the Holy Spirit and starve out the old nature with time. But it should be stressed that the old nature is still there and actually has the advantage of having been present longer than the new Spirit. A believer is subject to the flesh, the old nature, and could commit any sin it was used to committing before, including new ones.

**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.**

**Romans 7:18, 19**

Therefore, it would be wrong to simply state that a saved person is simply evil. Yes, the believer still has the evil, old nature. Yes, the believer is capable of doing that which is bad. However, the believer is a new creature, a composite of the old nature and the Holy Spirit.

**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

**II Corinthians 5:17**

The believer has a choice who to obey: the old sinful nature, or the Holy Spirit. A saved individual has been delivered from the dominion of the evil one.

**Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.**

**Colossians 1:12, 13**

A born-again believer is not defenseless against sin. Yet, every caution should be taken to avoid temptation. Many great preachers and other ministers that were greatly used by God fell to the sin of adultery, some fell to the lust of money, and some fell to pride. It is understandable that such instances can occur. Any believer can fall to sin, no matter the status attained. Thank God, every believer can say no to sin and be free. However, no believer should ever think he/she has grown enough to overcome sin; the old nature always lurks in a corner, ready to seize the right opportunity.

**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:**

**I Peter 5:8**

Every born-again Christian should constantly watch out for these pitfalls, so that the believers, like the ropewalker, might make it to their destination in safety. The Christian walk is challenging, but it is rewarding.

## Chapter 7

# Benefits of Christianity

A certain young pastor faced tremendous oppositional challenges with the congregation at the local church where he served. The frustration was so severe that the young pastor made a decision. He drove his pick-up truck to the church, parked right at the front door to his office. On getting down he entered the office and systematically packed all his books into the back of the truck. The church staff and members watched in amazement, wondering what the young man was up to. Without saying a word, the pastor entered his truck and drove to a nearby landfill. He emptied all the books into the ditch and set them on fire. He never returned to the clergy again.

This young man apparently missed it. He missed the whole point of what Christianity is, what the benefits of Christianity are, despite the fact that he was a pastor of a church. He must have been clueless to the value of what he threw away.

Compare this man's plight to the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.**

**Matthew 13:45, 46**

Jesus Christ used an illustration of a Smart Alec that knows the intricacies of commerce, not an average John Doe. We all know that merchants are interested in one thing only. Profit, and more profit. For a merchant to sell all that he had to purchase an item, there really must have been something to it. The item must have been of a value that surpassed everything else. The merchant in question sold everything to obtain the kingdom of heaven, or in other words, to become a Christian. Thus, it is clear that Christianity has tremendous benefits, though such benefits are carefully hidden for the child of God to discover. Christianity has amazing, unbeatable profits. According to the scripture we just read, it offers the profit of all profits. To find out what the benefits are, read on.

If we are honest with ourselves, many of us will admit difficulty of appreciating the rewards of following Christ. Most of the churches we know are struggling financially and otherwise. Many members of such churches are the epitome of failure, apparently because of ignorance regarding the value of the faith we confess. In addition, some churches don't play by the rules; they don't obey the Word of God. They consequently reap the negative rewards of disobedience. The rules are clearly specified in God's Word. We would all do well if we just do what the Word says and trust God with the results. Unfortunately, we simply don't obey the Word. End result: failures after failures.

At some churches, prayer meetings are simply scary, to say the least. All too often, the prayers are about scores of congregation members that are sick, poor, depressed, frustrated and/or suffering endlessly. Any unsaved person attending such a meeting for the first time would probably run. The situation is so awful that many children from Christian homes end up abandoning the faith when they grow up. They just can't see the point. Imagine a believer who is loyal and attends church, serves on the ushers' board, is seen first at every service and is frequently the last to leave. And yet, such a person can't find a job, can't afford to send the children to a decent school, the family's only car breaks down with no money to afford a repair, the marriage relationship is hitting the rocks. So what's the point of being a Christian?

Jesus Christ declared:

**Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**

**Luke 10:19**

Are we missing something? We have to be. If Jesus is the Truth and His word is true, the problem has to lay with us believers and not with Him. It is appalling that every Christian knows of at least one other believer who is suffering from one ailment or another. Frequent ailments include financial depravity, stress, relationship difficulties and many more. Often, there is no question that such believers are truly saved. But the majority nonetheless suffers so much agony.

**For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.**

**I Corinthians 11:30**

Every Christian should be informed in order to enjoy the victorious lives we are promised in the Word of God. If the Lord's body, Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God (The Bible), is not carefully studied and discerned, according to a careful, contextual study of I Corinthians chapter eleven, many would simply suffer or go with their needs unmet. To the extent that many sleep, that is, die untimely deaths.

Moving forward in our discussion, it is so vital for every believer to know and access the benefits, which we will now examine in detail.

## The Benefits:

### **1. Assurance of Eternal Life**

Let's face it, everyone desires to live forever if at all possible. The secular world knows this and continues to devote time and resources to studies of anti-aging science. The International Congress on Anti-Aging Medicine holds periodic conferences of doctors and scientists looking for ways to delay the aging process. Healthcare providers commonly give advice on nutrition and exercise as a means to achieve good health and prolong life. Dental flossing has been found to add years to the lifespan. Research is ongoing around the world on the subject of prolongation of lifespan. The efforts may admittedly have produced some good results: the average lifespan in the western world has increased in the last few decades. People, especially women now, commonly live into the 80s and 90s. Some make it past the 100-year mark. But, at the end of it all, everyone still has to face death.

Jesus said:

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**John 3:16**

God originally made man to live forever. Adam sinned and death came. Christ came to restore eternity to man. The huge expense of anti-aging research are ultimately unnecessary. Christians have eternal life, which is available, and freely so, to every human being through salvation in Christ. If this is true, then the eternal life begins now for every saved believer. Although physical death comes at some point, the real person inside the body lives on forever.

**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

**I Thessalonians 4:16, 17**

The gift of eternal life in Christ is comforting to the human mind. Christians have hope, the hope of eternal life. They always have something good to look forward to, regardless of the circumstances. Praise the Lord!

## **2. Prayer**

Technically speaking, only Christians have the privilege of prayer before God. Of course, God takes care of everyone, wicked or otherwise, but only Christian believers have access to the throne room of God to tender a petition.

**Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

**John 14:6**

**Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

**Hebrews 4:16**



**Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,**

**Hebrews 10:19**

Prayer is an invitation by God to all His children. It is the foundational mode of communion by which frail human beings communicate with Him. It is the primary determinant of spiritual fervency of the growing Christian.

**Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.**

**Jeremiah 33:3**

**Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;**

**Ephesians 6: 18**

Hence, there are different kinds of prayer, but we will focus on petition prayer for the purpose of our discussion. The commonest prayer and probably the most misunderstood and misapplied is that of petition. Jesus Christ addressed the issue in details in Luke chapters eleven and twelve.

In a petition prayer, the believer is making a specific request to God for something. This might be for a specific material item, for specific needs to be met, or for deliverance from a specific challenge. The word “specific” is repeated for emphasis. We need to state exactly how much money we need from God to become debt-free. We need to state the specific degree that is being sought at a college. Exactly what that person needs from God should be clearly stated in a petition prayer.

**Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.**

**Mark 11:24**

So we need to ask only once and believe we will receive. There is no scriptural reason to keep asking God for the same thing over and over if you believe you received it the first time you've asked. Of course, we need to keep praising and thanking God daily for believing that He has answered that prayer. And then simply wait for the physical manifestation of the thing we asked for. It doesn't matter how long it takes, if you believe, then you shall receive them.

**And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.**

**I John 5:14, 15**

The key is to ask according to His will, meaning according to the promises he has made in His Word, not rote repetition of "according to Your will" as is so often heard in ignorant prayers. A believer should clearly define what he/she wants, then go and search the Bible for the promise pertaining to what is needed. Then the person should go before God in prayer, armed with the appropriate promise to ask God with boldness for Him to fulfill His Word and supply the specific need.

It is akin to seeking redress before a Judge in a court of law. Any smart person would get a good lawyer who would research the case, find the applicable law and go to court with boldness to present the client's case. No one goes to court unprepared, thinking an emotional display of tears would move the Judge to grant a petition. Not so! Doing that would be foolishness. Anyone crying in a court of law would simply be excused to leave, and later return to the stand with objective legal proof. To the Christian, the Bible is our book of law before God, the Judge of all ages.

**Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.**

**Matthew 7: 7, 8**

Actually, Jesus Christ likened most believers to pagans who are known for their focus on material things.

**Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

**Matthew 6:31-33**

The believer's focus should not be on material things. Seeking material satisfaction makes the believer no different than the unsaved. Material things come with a responsibility. Being under the dominion of Satan, any material thing has an inherent, unseen, and powerful force that drains the human psyche. And, the bigger the thing is, the bigger the negative influence.

Consider a piece of clothing. Once bought, it has to be washed and kept clean. It needs a closet for storage. In order to have a closet, you need an apartment or a house. And so a train of mental stress sets in as a result of a single item of clothing.

Similarly, a car has to be maintained. A whole gamut of legal, and other items need to be obtained and kept updated. As any car owner knows, the car would have to be licensed, insured, washed regularly, and its engine maintained. The same applies to a house which is of more value. There have been people who thought they wanted a big house, got it and lost their peace of mind. Owning a house can create a lot stress if it's not bought at the right time. Several couples that would have done well living in a modest apartment or a small house, end up in a divorce court as a result of the conflicts created by moving into a big house.

An entrepreneur in America worked relentlessly to establish a software business. Ultimately, his dream was realized. The company went public, raising billions of dollars on the same day it opened on the Stock Market. That same day, the owner of the business got into his fancy sports car, drove at high speed, had an accident and died. He died the same day he became a billionaire.

**And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

**Luke 12: 29-32**

Material things definitely have their role and place. A simple rule of thumb is that whatever is not being used is not needed. Any item that sits in storage is a waste of space and of money. If millions of African dollars sit in a Swiss account somewhere, what use is it? My fellow Africans really need to learn this lesson. Stashing up money in a foreign account makes the money useless, both to the owner and to the community. As a matter of fact, this practice amounts to an abuse of money, a sure way to keep the continent of Africa impoverished indefinitely.

Anyway, lets get back to our discussion. Jesus Christ taught the believers what to seek and what exactly to ask God for. This is one of the greatest hidden secrets of Christianity that would transform the life of every discerning believer.

**If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**

**Luke 11:13**

Here it is: Christians should ask God for one thing, the Holy Spirit. Let's write this down, memorize it, and engrave it on our minds. If this fact is understood, we will have more material things than we can manage. Further, we will discover that the world's definition of wealth is wrong. God will give us life's true riches, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—if we dare ask.

The Holy Spirit's empowerment is utterly useless without a vision or an assignment from God. Let's start by seeking our vision and putting it down in writing. Then ask God for our assignment. And then pursue our goals with all our might. The Holy Spirit will work through us to help us perform our assignment, which has to be one that glorifies

God. Remember, we are joining God in His work. We are not coercing God to do our work for us. If our vision is to make millions of dollars to accrue material things and impress our friends, we missed it. Big time.

**Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.**

**James 4:3**

**For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.**

**I Corinthians 3:9**

**And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.**

**Acts 9:6**

The Apostle Paul asked God for his assignment first. As long as he stayed true to that calling, his needs were met. So much so that he wrote more than two-thirds of the entire New Testament. What a privilege!

Ezra is another illustration. He wrote a clear mission statement:

**For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements.**

**Ezra 7:10**

When the time was ripe, Artaxerxes, King of Babylon, granted Ezra's request to lead Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the destroyed temple. Ezra was provided with silver and gold, much more than he would have dreamed of. The King provided all the resources needed to accomplish Ezra's vision (Ezra chapter seven).

In conclusion, believers should realize that we really don't need money, we need a vision. We really don't need material things, we need an assignment from God. The Holy Spirit will empower us to accomplish our assignment. Then we will have all the material things, more than we could ever imagine. Remember that God, our heavenly father owns the entire earth and all its fullness. In fact, He owns the entire universe. So, it doesn't matter to God what fancy car we drive, it doesn't matter what big house we live in. As long as we do things according to His Word, we have arrived. Thank God for petition prayer.

Other types of prayer include consecration, intercession, praise, penitential, supplication, propitiatory and imprecatory.<sup>10</sup>

### **3. Understanding the Bible**

The Christian individual has the privilege of being able to understand the scriptures. The Bible is undoubtedly a spiritual book. It can only be understood on a spiritual level. So often, people express frustration at their inability to understand what they read. This is because it can only be understood through the Author, the Holy Spirit.

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**

**II Timothy 3:16**

**Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**

**II Peter 1:20, 21**

At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit moves into the heart of the believer. It is the resident Holy Spirit that enables Christians to understand the Bible.

**What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**

**I Corinthians 6:19, 20**

**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.**

**John 16:13**

The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Astounding. It blows the circuits of the human mind. The same Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, lives within me! Any Christian that truly comprehends this fact would be dangerous in a positive sense. Such a person would never fear any challenge in this life. He/She would never be depressed. Simply put, a believer that understands the implication of the indwelling Holy Spirit *cannot* fail at any venture.

The Holy Spirit helps us understand the Bible through prayer.

**Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,**

**Ephesians 1:15-19**

A believer should approach the study of the Bible prayerfully. This is important since scriptural study is the primary determining factor of victory or failure in the life of a Christian. Understanding the scriptures also helps the believer to understand life in general. In fact, the Holy Bible could be described as the manual of life. The Bible helps us to navigate the intricacies of daily living. It helps us to know right from wrong. Consequently, it helps us to make the right decisions.

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.  
Psalm 119:105**

#### **4. Forgiveness**

Only Christians have the benefit of forgiveness of sins. It may be a shocking revelation that believers do sin. But it is true. An important note, however, is that though a believer may fall into sin, a true believer should not live a lifestyle of sin.

**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

I John 1:10

**For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.**

**Romans 7:14, 15**

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**I John 1:9**

The blood of Christ that was shed on the cross has atoned for the believer's sin forever. On the contrary, unregenerate sinners have their



sins kept on record. Sins can only be forgiven through salvation. God does not wink at sin. The unforgiven sinner is destined for hell.

**The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.**

**Psalm 9:17**

## **5. Access to the Original Dominion**

As we saw in chapter one, God created man in His own image.

**And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:**

**Genesis 1:26a**

God created man in His image. We also learned that God is a spirit (John 4:24). So, man is a spirit that lives in a body and possesses a soul.

The fact remains, that God made man to be like Himself. What God is in heaven, He wanted man to be the same here on earth. This beats human understanding: God originally created man to be like Himself. What an awesome truth!

Further, God gave man total dominion over all creatures on the earth.

**For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.**

**Psalm 8:5-8**

David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, gives us an exposition of Genesis 1:26. He elaborates on the original dominion as it was handed to Adam. All things were put under Adam's feet. He was crowned with a special glory. The glory was so intense that clothing was unnecessary. Adam could commune directly, not only with God, but also with all creation. Everything was under his control. How awesome! The psalmist could not help but exclaim twice:

**O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**  
**Psalm 8:1a**

**O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**  
**Psalm 8:9**

Please join me to exclaim: O Almighty God, our creator and owner, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! There is no question about it, God loves man beyond any human description. If we could just imagine in our mind what Adam enjoyed, it was absolutely awesome.

But, as it happened, Adam sinned in the garden, and he lost the original dominion. Not only that, he lost that God-likeness and the crown of glory. Adam and Eve's bodies were radically changed forever. They both became ashamed of their nakedness and needed to be clothed.

**And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.**

**Genesis 3:7**

Fear also came into their mindset. They became afraid, even of God with whom they were previously in unhindered communion.

**And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid**

**themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.**

**Genesis 3:8-10**

The dominion that we now have in our present age pales exceedingly in comparison to the original dominion. What we have is a poor remnant of what was given to Adam originally. Matter, natural forces, all animals, fish and birds were subject to Adam's command.

Everything on earth changed radically as a result of the sin of disobedience. Even the animals were subject to the negative change.

**For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.**

**Romans 8:20-22**

Now there is much violence in the animal kingdom. In the beginning it was not so. In our age, few animals die natural deaths. If not hunted for food or game, the majority of the animals kill and devour themselves. It is interesting to note that man was not given permission to eat animals until after the flood (Genesis 9:3-4).

In the present age, few animals are still subject to man's control. On occasion, even those few get irate and attack their masters. Circus animals have been known to kill their trainer.

The remnants of God-likeness are probably the special talents that a few individuals now have. Imagine, Adam would have been able to do all things with absolute ease, and he was probably talented in all things. But he, and consequently the human race, lost that, and lost it for good.

Further, when Adam lost the loving, innocent relationship with God, he and the rest of us lost it with fellow men. The natural relationship amongst men is not that of love. Immediately following the rebellion, and not too long after expulsion from the Garden of Eden,

Cain, the first-born, killed his brother, Abel. Since then, there has been war after war of men killing and devouring each other. Such wars seem to be most intense among close relations.

**And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.**

**Genesis 4:8**

See the awful effect of sin! Nonetheless, God put in place a plan to redeem man.

**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.**

**Genesis 3:15**

That seed of the woman that would (and did) crush the head of Satan is Jesus Christ.

**But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**

**Hebrews 2:9**

Jesus Christ came to earth to offer His body as a living sacrifice to atone the original sin of man. He tasted death for everyone. As we can see in Hebrews 2:9, through death, Christ became the new owner of the original dominion. Satan was stripped of his authority and it was transferred to Jesus Christ, the rightful owner.

**And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I will give it.**

**Luke 4:6**

We know that Satan is a liar. But, in this encounter with Jesus Christ in the desert, Jesus did not argue the fact as stated by Satan. Jesus knew that the time was near when the devil would be completely stripped of his authority.

**And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.**

**Colossians 2:15**

Christ defeated the evil forces at Calvary, taking over the powers they usurped from Adam.

**I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.**

**Daniel 7:13, 14.**

Jesus Christ, the Son of man, was given the dominion by the Ancient of days, Almighty God. Jesus now owns the original dominion forever.

**And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

**Matthew 29:18**

**Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**

**Luke 10:19**

The first word “power” used in Luke 10:19 is the Greek word *exousia* (Strong’s Concordance, 1849), meaning *authority or right*. The second word “power” is the word *dunamis* (Strong’s Concordance, 1411), meaning *ability or might*. Thank God that Jesus Christ gave Christians authority over the might or ability of Satan: the serpents and scorpions (Revelation 12: 9).

Now, does any individual Christian *own* this authority? Do we own the dominion? Definitely not! What we have is access, and that is more than enough. The end result is the same and not any less wonderful. The only stipulation is that only the Holy Spirit exercises the dominion through a believer as He wills.

**But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.**

**I Corinthians 12:11**

**And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.**

**Daniel 7:27**

No single human being can handle the original dominion in our present state. We just don’t have the capacity to determine if and when to activate the dominion and for what purpose. Adam and Eve had the body and mind of innocence, yet failed in the management of the original dominion. The present-day man in the frail, body of sin and corrupted minds will definitely do the same, if not worse. The original dominion would be more than anyone can operate. It would be easily misused.

**And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.**

**Colossians 1:18-20**

**Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:**

**Ephesians 1:9-11**

The scriptures clearly show us that all things, including the original dominion, have been vested in the body of Christ. Again, Christians constitute the body of Christ, and as a result, we have access to the dominion. Although it is as the Spirit wills and not out of our selfish, rotten human desires.

To outline the immensity of the original dominion, let us examine some of the examples given us by Jesus Christ while he walked the earth.

a. Christ demonstrated His dominion over matter: He turned water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). He also divided five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed about five thousand men, not counting the women and children (Mark 6:35-44).

b. Jesus Christ demonstrated His authority over nature and its forces: Jesus commanded the wind and raging water in a storm, and they obeyed (Luke 8:22-25).

**And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.**

**Luke 8:25**

c. Christ's authority over the demons/or evil spirits was clearly shown in Matthew 8:28-34.

**So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.**

**Matthew 8:31, 32a**

**And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.**

**Luke 4:36**

d. Jesus commanded the fishes to enter into Peter's net after Peter had toiled fruitlessly all night. Christ showed His dominion over the fish.

**Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.**

**Luke 5:4-6**

e. Jesus has ultimate authority over death.

**And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talithacumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.**

**Mark 5:41,42**

**And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go.**

**John 11:43, 44**



**The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet.**

**I Corinthians 15:26, 27a**

Christ said to all believers:

**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.**

**John 14:12**

All believers have equal access to the original dominion, to do the same work that Christ did when he walked the earth.

Finally, let's return to the story of the young pastor outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Is that pastor saved? Only God can judge. Was he informed about what we have learned in this book so far? Probably not. No one could be armed spiritually and turn away from Christianity.

**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance:**

**Hebrews 6:4-6a**

## Chapter 8

# The Kingdom of Heaven

It would be a shocking surprise to many, to discover that the focus of Christ's ministry was not on religion, but rather on the kingdom of God. The terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God*, often used interchangeably in the Bible, refer to the same entity. It could be argued that the kingdom of heaven is an integral part of the kingdom of God. However, for the purpose of our discussion, we will assume that the two phrases have the same meaning.

The phrase "kingdom of God" was used by the four gospel writers: five times by Matthew, fifteen times by Mark, thirty-two times by Luke, and two times by John. It is interesting to note, however, that among the gospel writers, Mathew exclusively used the phrase "kingdom of heaven," a total of thirty-two times.

Jesus Christ started His ministry by a proclaiming the imminent arrival of the kingdom of heaven.

**From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

**Matthew 4:17**

On the surface, the message sounds like a warning of an impending disastrous event. It almost sounds like: "Repent of your sins, for the judgment day is coming." Unfortunately, many Christians in their attempt to witness give this erroneous connotation to the message. While the sincere efforts made to preach the gospel is right and commendable, the connotation commonly given to this message of Christ is totally wrong.

One might wonder, what makes the gospel message good news if it is laden with fear? Gospel means good news, a message everyone should want to hear. So how can this apparently ominous warning be good?

The answer lies in examining the message that Jesus Christ brought. Jesus called for repentance, which in the original Greek, *metanoeo* or *metanoia* means to *change one's mind, to think*

*differently.*<sup>11</sup> So, Jesus called for the people to change their mindset because a new system of government was about to arrive, one that is headed by the King, God Almighty. If this explanation doesn't fully clarify Christ's message as good news, let's examine the word kingdom.

Kingdom, or *basileia* (Greek), denotes sovereignty, royal power or dominion.<sup>12</sup> It means a realm, a physical territory, or people over whom a king rules. The kingdom of God then means a territory, or a group of people, that is ruled by God.

The British Empire is an example of a kingdom. It is headed by a queen and comprised of British citizens. Other important points to note about a kingdom are that the king or queen is responsible for the upkeep of the citizens. And in order to attain citizenship status, they have to be born into the kingdom. A kingdom has its own system of government, its own security system, health system, financing, and so on. The citizens of a kingdom have rights that are expressly defined in their constitution.

In the same way, God rules over the kingdom of Heaven. The citizens are the born-again Christians who have rights stipulated in the constitution, the Holy Bible. This explains why the gospel is good news. The arrival of God's kingdom was announced and in His kingdom God promises to provide for the needs of His citizens.

The spiritual kingdom of God arrived on the day of Pentecost. The arrival was ushered in by the Holy Spirit's coming to dwell within the believer.

**And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

**Acts 2:1-4**

The kingdom has been here for over two thousand years; the full arrival in the physical sense has yet to come. The time of physical

manifestation of the kingdom of God will be when Jesus Christ returns at the rapture, along with the saints, to rule physically here on earth.

In the meantime, Christ rules in the heart of the believer. Born-again believers are citizens of the kingdom. It should be emphasized that the church is not the kingdom. The church is the assembly of believers, the citizens.

**Now then we are ambassadors for Christ**

**II Corinthians 5:20a**

The message of Christ was primarily that of the kingdom of God. He used several analogies of the parables to illustrate the point. The miracles were a result of Christ's compassion, not the purpose of Christ coming to the earth.

**And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.**

**Luke 4:43**

The message of the kingdom is so important that even after the resurrection, Christ continued His focus on the same message.

**To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:**

**Acts 1:3**

The Apostle Paul's message was also that of the kingdom of God.

**And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**

**Acts 19:8**

**And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.**

**Acts 28:23**

God's original plan was for Adam and Eve, along with their posterity, to constitute the kingdom of God. Things changed after the fall, man got disconnected spiritually from God. But out of His infinite mercies, God put into action the process of reconciliation through Jesus Christ's atoning for the original sin, thereby permitting the reconnection of man back to God. However, this plan must be voluntarily accepted. God gave man the freedom to choose. And God's gifts are without repentance; He will not withdraw what He already gave to man.

Abram, later called Abraham, was called out by God to establish this kingdom.

**Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**

**Genesis 12:1-3**

According to God's plan, the kingdom includes all the families of the earth. The Jews were chosen by God to be the ones that would teach all nations of the earth about the kingdom. Well, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was a Jew. Praise the Lord; all families of the earth are blessed through Christ.

So the gospel is truly amazing good news: the citizenship of God's kingdom is made available to all. Jesus Christ paid the entire price that guarantees that citizenship. The citizens, born-again Christians, have all their needs met here on earth; in addition, they are guaranteed eternal life in heaven. What a privilege!

A quick note about heaven: heaven is real. It is a place of infinite dimensions that no book can describe. The primary thing to note is that it was created by God.

**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**

**Genesis 1:1**

Again, it is clearly stated, God created the heaven and the earth, period. The Bible went on to describe in detail the creation of the earth but was completely silent about that of the heaven. We know that heaven is where God resides, and it belongs entirely to Him.

**The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.**

**Psalms 115:16**

Jesus Christ promised heaven to the believers.

**Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.**

**John 14:1-2**

Jesus Christ went to prepare a place for believers. That place is heaven. But with a careful study of the scriptures, we find that Jesus Christ is coming again to rule here on this earth, first for a thousand years, and then for eternity. Therefore, heaven is only a temporary place of residence for believers. Contrary to traditional belief, heaven is not our home: it is God's home. The earth has been given to the children of men. Those that have been saved through Christ will inhabit earth eternally.

Any person that refuses salvation is destined for hell, the place of everlasting fire. Just as heaven is real, so is hell. The awesome thing is that we as men and women have a choice. Do we want God's design

and plan for us in this life with the guarantee of eternity in Christ, or do we want to keep sweating it out now, pursuing the wind, and ultimately end up in hell fire? The choice is ours.

# Conclusion

Jesus Christ said:

**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**Matthew 11:28**

A man or woman without God is heavy laden, laboring fruitlessly, much like a fish taken out of the water. Death by suffocation is a certainty to such a fish, as it cannot survive outside of its natural environment. God has established a natural environment for man, which was lost in the garden. Since then, man has been struggling and suffocating. Jesus Christ came to earth to offer His blood on the cross; He paid the price that made it possible for man to reconnect with God. Christianity, the practice of a follower of Jesus Christ, is the only way for any man or woman to flourish and avoid all the ills and calamities troubling the human race as a result of sin. To cap it off, the Christian has hope of eternal life.

It is hoped that the reader by now has a better view of what Christianity really is. If not yet a believer, I implore you to take the bold step of confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior according to Romans 10:9. This single act of accepting Jesus Christ is the most important thing you can do in this life. Don't delay, get saved today, tomorrow might be too late.

For the established Christian, if the Lord has spoken to you through the message of this book, harden not your hearts, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. The Israelites saw God's work; they also heard His word but did not mix it with faith. Don't be like them. Start doing something, now.



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