



FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS

ALEDA J. MARSHALL



FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS
WITHIN THE
FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT GARDEN

ALEDA J. MARSHALL

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DEDICATION

TO

JESUS, MY SAVIOR

FORGIVE ME

TO

ALMIGHTY GOD

THANK YOU

TO

***ALL THOSE
I MAY HAVE WRONGED

FORGIVE ME

TO
ALL THOSE
WHO HAVE WRONGED ME

I FORGIVE YOU***

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, *Lord, HOW OFT SHALL MY BROTHER SIN AGAINST ME, AND I FORGIVE HIM? TILL SEVEN TIMES?* ²² Jesus saith unto him, *I say not unto thee, UNTIL SEVEN TIMES: BUT, UNTIL SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN.*

²³ *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.* ²⁴ *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.* ²⁵ *But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.* ²⁶ *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.* ²⁷ Then *THE LORD OF THAT SERVANT WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION, AND LOOSED HIM, AND FORGAVE HIM THE DEBT.*

²⁸ *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou*

owest. ²⁹ And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰ **AND HE WOULD NOT:** but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

³¹ *So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.* ³² *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: ³³ Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴ And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

³⁵ **SO LIKEWISE SHALL MY HEAVENLY FATHER DO ALSO UNTO YOU, IF YE FROM YOUR HEARTS FORGIVE NOT EVERYONE HIS BROTHER THEIR TRESPASSES.**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

But IF YE DO NOT FORGIVE, NEITHER WILL YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES. Mark 11:26

FORGIVENESS

Without *FORGIVENESS*, we may realize ourselves or may be observed by others, to be baffled and bewildered, confused and consumed, and possibly even discredited and disgraced. Some of us may have even been written off by those same others or by ourselves, as tragic; evidencing just how abandoned and alone we truly appear to be because of lack of *FORGIVENESS*!

Without *FORGIVENESS*, our lives as we may have known them, may never be the same. Bitterness, regret, *CONDEMNATION* and rage, may soon be, if not already, knocking at our doors. There may be no *FORGIVENESS* in our present impression of life's landscape.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, the trudge of lack of reconciliation frequently recognizes us facing the slicing, slivering, shredding and stripping influences created by and through that *CONDEMNATION* act of finger pointing.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, whether we are Christian or not, when we are confronted with the realities of a relationship's closing door, eventually, if not at this very moment, the pain of each torturing detail related to estrangement may establish residence collectively within every single facet of our mind, body and soul.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, we may even suspect that the world may have shifted a little on its axis as we numbly witness our united realm slowly being ripped apart into separate, potentially perilous and precarious actualities of lack of *FORGIVENESS*.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, our existence may now or may possibly in the future, be infused with the onslaught of agonizing hurts, impairments, destructions, and forfeitures as each new episode exposes more of our fraying nerve ending; soon to be, if not already: tender, bleeding, raw and aching from the excruciating realities of this lingering exacerbated death. Is there no color for *FORGIVENESS* in this scenery?

Without *FORGIVENESS*, and with each new deluge, we may be manically treading water; trying to remain afloat. Regrettably, every new out of the blue surge just seems to surpass and submerge us further. Maybe we seek some form of anchor to cling onto as we struggle for a moment to catch our breath and regain our strength. As we search for some support in our relentless storm of events, we may wonder whether there will be a hand bearing *FORGIVENESS* in our fumble.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, our vision may be blurred from the salt carried in the cascade of tears engulfing our already clouded and conceivably distorted realities. Friends and acquaintances offer a medley of quick fix anchors that may soon have us immersed, if not further, from where their dubious rescue attempts commenced. Some we may have tried, while others we know better than to even consider. Still others broach the topic of *FORGIVENESS*.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, we may not want to have a relationship with anyone right now. Our druthers may be that we would rather have the world just leave us alone. Believably, it may have been a long time since someone has even tried to be warmhearted to us.

Without *FORGIVENESS*, there is convincingly so much anger and callousness harbored within our hearts that we genuinely wouldn't recognize kindheartedness, even if it were offered. Or, through some

cognitive reasoning, we may deem ourselves unworthy to receive any form of sympathetic gesture, even if an empathetic hand was extended.

How long has it been since someone expressed *LOVE* to us? When was the last time we felt joy, real *JOY*? And if there was ever a need for *PEACE*, we wanted that yesterday. And speaking of yesterday, is any of this ever going to end? We are, after all, at the end of our rope; at the end of our *PATIENCE*. We are definitely not *LONGSUFFERERING* in our present conditions.

Have we forgotten the meaning of *GENTLENESS* or *KINDNESS* with all the pessimism and reproof presently encompassing us? Conceivably, it may be difficult for us to recall the last time, we or anyone else for that matter, has smiled. *GOODNESS* is not a word that represents any aspect of estrangement. Repulsion seems to be the word that is more apropos these days.

Plausibly it was the lack of loyalty and *FAITH* that had released the initial flood gates that commenced this UNFORGIVING disaster. Now, we may spend our time watching some, if not all of the smashed fragments of our past and present existence rush past in the relentless heaves of our realities.

The consequences of this dog eat dog world of lack of *FORGIVENESS* may have growled away any bearer of the *MEEKNESS* or *GENTLENESS* that we may have once believed in. We may ponder whether the many years of our respective lacks of *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL* contributed to the recent whirlwinds of chaos.

What we really need right here and now, is an eternal embrace from the One Who desires to be most dear to us. He *LOVES* us so much and wants to have an everlasting relationship with us so very deeply that He sent His only Son Jesus to pay the price for all our past, present and future sins. That's *FORGIVENESS*!

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ For God sent *NOT* his Son into the world *TO CONDEMN* the world; but

that the world through him might *BE SAVED*. ¹⁸ He that *BELIEVETH* on him is *NOT CONDEMNED*: but he that *BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18

Through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, God offers us, not *CONDEMNATION* for our actions, but the gift of mercy and *FORGIVENESS* from *ALL* of our sins. After all:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Romans 3:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the *GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD*. Romans 6:23

With everything that may be, is being, or will be ripped away from us, we probably would *LOVE* to experience the *KINDNESS* of *FORGIVENESS*. Lately, all we may seem to bear and hear is *CONDEMNATION* from both within and without. Maybe in fact, we have never before experienced receiving or giving true mercy or *FORGIVENESS* ourselves.

Perhaps we know nothing about how to have a personal relationship with God, our Father, through the mercy provided by His Son, Jesus; or anybody else for that matter. Based on the current events of our lives, we may appear to be a failure at having camaraderie with anyone.

Wouldn't we, if truth be told, like to learn about mercy and *FORGIVENESS* for the sake of our health, for the sake of our minds, for the sake of our souls and for the sake of eternity? Let me give you a glimpse into the mercy of God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. ***SEE CHAPTER 12; WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CHILD OF GOD?***

If we have accepted Jesus as Lord of our life before, during or after this emotional rollercoaster, we have probably realized that we must make some critical decisions. But first we must recognize that when we received God's gift of Salvation provided at the cross, we became the Bride of Christ.

... and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. Isaiah 62:5

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for *I HAVE ESPOUSED YOU TO ONE HUSBAND, THAT I MAY PRESENT YOU AS A CHASTE VIRGIN TO CHRIST.* 2 Corinthians 11:2

As our Groom, Jesus has additional gifts for His Bride, the Church. However, we must first choose as to whether we will be obedient in order that we may receive these gifts from Him. These gifts are the Fruit of the Spirit and include Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Faithfulness and Self-Control. Such gifts will allow us to overcome, heal, move on, grow, dream, pursue and experience Jesus' true purpose and freedom for our lives. All our God wants us to do is to believe in Him and trust Him at His Word.

But maybe some of us are not ready yet to trust God with every aspect of our lives. Maybe in our stubbornness and/or own determination, we may rather choose to remain in our personal dung piles or pig sties of abandonment, discouragement, and loneliness due to the effects of lack of *FORGIVENESS* in our own lives; similar to the prodigal son, before he came to himself. After frittering away all of his known earthly security, this self-indulgent son found himself a prostrate, broken, and run-down wreck.

Until he came to his right mind, he was probably spewing criticism and judgment; full of angry accusations, self-*CONDEMNATION* and possibly even loathing in lack of *FORGIVENESS*, if not against others, most probably against self. The same destruction may befall us, the like of which may only return to us; causing our own self wreckage. We have a choice: hatred and anger or, *FORGIVENESS*.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: *CONDEMN NOT, and YE SHALL NOT BE CONDEMNED: FORGIVE, AND YE SHALL BE FORGIVEN:* Luke 6:37

Let us journey down *FORGIVENESS* Road and turn right onto Fruit of the Spirit Avenue together. Let us allow the overflowing abundant *LOVE* of the Holy Spirit guide, guard, protect, provide and empower us with His victorious strength. Let us trust in, rely on and have confidence in Him to perform His perfect will in each of our lives, no matter what the tempests may bring.

What is this Fruit of the Spirit? The Fruit of the Spirit is a Biblical term as expressed in Galatians 5:22-23 that indicates the nine qualities that the Holy Spirit desires to produce in the life gardens of the children of Father God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, ²³ MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

This Fruit is intended to be an outward expression of the true Christian's life; a reflection of God's Light to the world. The Fruit of the Spirit is cultivated in each of our hearts' gardens by the Holy Spirit. Each of our independent orchards may be fertilized and caused to flourish with and through *FORGIVENESS*, our obedience, the Scriptures or Word of God, and our personal relationship with Jesus.

Through our *FORGIVENESS*, submission and obedience, Jesus through the Holy Spirit, prepares us for His divine purpose by forming, fashioning, and renewing us into the expressions of His Light to a lost and dark world. This same world desperately needs to receive His *FORGIVENESS* too.

Worldly success today is much different than the success that is to be reflected in the life of a Christian who is reborn as a new creature, washed in the *FORGIVING* blood of Christ.

Therefore IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE: OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Christians are to have the mind of Christ. Our minds are renewed when we meditate on the Word of God. As we think His thoughts and meditate on His ways, our minds commence to be cleansed or renewed.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. 1 Corinthians 2:16

We have choices to make as we embark on this journey and wade through the current wreckage of our disconnected or possibly, soon to be disjointed

lives. On this current road to destruction that the enemy has planned for us, are we going to arise out of the ashes and proceed down the golden spans that God has purposed for us by having His mind and thinking His thought?

Or, are we, through a rebellious spirit, going to continue to carry with us luggage crammed full of unimaginable anger, bitterness, cynicism, rejection and lack of *FORGIVENESS*? The longer we bear these suitcases stuffed with resentments, outrage, fury, etc., allowing their weight to entomb us ever deeper under our burden of woes, the more harden our callous hearts will become. Think of what shell of a person may be able to exist in that pitiless persona? Have you recited the Lord's Prayer lately?

And FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS (SINS), AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS (THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED AGAINST US). Matthew 6:12

If we are to *FORGIVE*, then it is imperative that we renew our minds and think Godly thoughts in order to continue in the act of *FORGIVENESS*. We cannot ruminate on the offenses of the past or the present. It is essential in order for us to move on and grow, that we reflect on the sweet whispers of our eternal *LOVE*, Jesus, day and night. It will only be then that we will have the strength to *FORGIVE* and to maintain a *FORGIVING* spirit. Taking into account all that was executed against Jesus prior to and upon the cross, what were some of His final words?

... FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO ... Luke 23:34

That is true *FORGIVENESS*; that is true *LOVE*. In his research, Dwight L. Moody came across this following work and included it in his writings on the Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22-23 as follows:

“JOY is LOVE exultant, PEACE is LOVE in repose, and LONG SUFFERING is LOVE enduring. It is all LOVE, you see, A GENTLENESS is LOVE in society, and GOODNESS is LOVE in action, and FAITH is LOVE on the battle-field, and MEEKNESS is LOVE at school, and TEMPERANCE is LOVE in training.” (emphasis supplied)

What is most mindboggling of all about God's mercy and *FORGIVENESS* is that He chose us individually to receive His *FORGIVENESS* and to be the Bride of Christ. God purchased these junkyards, called our lives, with the precious redeeming blood of Jesus. He wants us to go forth into a lost and hurting world to minister and encourage people just like ourselves who may have also been shattered by the pain of lack of *FORGIVENESS* and the myriads of effects that may have on each life. God wants us to be His Light by bearing this fruit; His Fruit:

**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 ... John 15:16**

Whether you are male or female, as Christians, we are the Bride of Christ and Jesus is our Groom! As the prodigal son came to his senses, returning to seek mercy and *FORGIVENESS* from his father who was ever waiting and watching for his return, so our Father God is ever waiting with open arms, and watching with anticipation and expectation, our arrival and our return to Him.

Are we starting to catch sight of and are we reaching out to catch hold of this *ANCHOR*, our Jesus? Do we sense His arms in our fumble, reaching out to grasp our hand? Can we even imagine what it will be like to have a never ending *LOVE*; to be embrace by One Who will *NEVER LEAVE US* or *FORSAKE US*?

**For *THY MAKER IS THINE HUSBAND; THE LORD OF HOSTS IS HIS
NAME*; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; *THE GOD OF THE
WHOLE EARTH SHALL HE BE CALLED*. Isaiah 54:5**

Maybe we have left the experience of the *LOVE* of God and now desire to return to this *TRUE LOVE*? Are we ready for an eternal *LOVE* relationship with our Groom, Jesus?

**And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and
she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and
*RETURN TO MY FIRST HUSBAND; FOR THEN WAS IT BETTER WITH
ME THAN NOW*. Hosea 2:7**

Shall we embark on this *FORGIVENESS* journey? Aren't we at all curious about this Fruit of the Spirit that the Holy Spirit longs to tend in our personal hearts' gardens? Let us come to His *AGAPE* estate together. Shall we fall in *LOVE* and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Father God? Let us learn to *FLOURISH* in *FORGIVENESS*. Through the Word of God and obedience coupled with *FORGIVENESS*, let us absorb the rich nutrients, and realize the eternal, embracing and empowering *LOVE* and restoration, awaiting us as we discover how to thrive in *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* within our Fruit of the Spirit gardens.

**When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1
Corinthians 13:11**

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

CHAPTER 2

LOVE

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is **LOVE**, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

ALL FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS AGAPE - LOVE

Let's think back to the first time that we thought we "*fell in LOVE*"? I know, in our present state of affairs, this is the last topic of conversation that we may wish to recall at this interval. *LOVE* may not have tapped on our door for quite some time. Hate, on the other hand, has been the guests more often welcomed, invited or not. Come on; work with me here! I know that we each have fallen in love at least once in our lives.

Was it the twinkle in the eye of that little chap or lassie in our first grade Sunday school class? Or, was it the youngster who had just been transplanted into our neighborhood that we met while they were unloading a bicycle off of the back of a moving van? Maybe it was the high school football star or prom queen who casually smiled at us in the school hallway. Or, perhaps our special someone was the young man or woman that we had met during one of our youth group activities or in one of our college classes?

Remember those initial feelings? Does this inquiry conjure up memories of butterflies fluttering throughout our middle section when in the presence of that special someone? When attempting to converse, did we find ourselves faltering over our tied tongue desperately endeavoring to get the words to

come out of our mouth in a sensible fashion? Did our friends and family notice that we were not behaving like our normal self; that we were a little more pre-absorbed and scatterbrain than usual? Were we in LOVE?

Were we floating, as it were, through our daily activities? Did it seem as though every step we took never even came near to touching the ground? Was our mind in constant thought of this mesmerizing acquaintance? Did we want to or were we already spending every waking moment captivated and fascinated in infatuated consideration of every single facet of their being? Were we in *LOVE*?

We may have in fact, “*FALLEN IN LOVE*”. Our life as we had known it had changed forever. We literally may have become totally engrossed in this all-encompassing happening; totally immersed in this life changing occurrence. Back then, as we may have cavorted about in our daily activities, we may have displayed no semblance of understanding. Our days were probably spent tripping over our tongue, our feet, and/or ourselves. Now, if any of us eventually married the aforementioned prince or princess, we may have since come to realize that “*falling in LOVE*” and “*sustaining LOVE*” are two very different cups of tea.

I have had the experience of “*falling in LOVE*” several times in my life. My teen years were primarily spent with a young man that I had met in my neighborhood. He was an only child who was several months older than me. Both of our fathers were mechanics. We dated for five years and were to be wed after high school. However, when I began attending an affluent Catholic girls’ high school, my perception of life and the worldly possibilities it offered expanded significantly.

Being the eldest of eight children, I was blessed with hard working parents striving to provide a better life than the poverty ridden experiences harking back to the Great Depression days, with the many episodes and events that molded their respective lives. Conversely, the revelations provided through this freshly enlightening educational exposure unexpectedly illuminated many alternatives not envisioned in my life’s dreaming thus far.

Becoming fantastically more apparent to me was the discovery that through successful training and tutelage, it was possible to achieve the worldly knowledge, achievement and wealth that was being exhibited to me through the lives of some of my classmates' families. Unfortunately, this eye opener resulted in me becoming totally dissatisfied with my current status quo. What did that mean to me at the time?

That meant that my "soon to be mechanic" boyfriend was no longer good enough or ambitious enough for me to marry. That also meant that I was ashamed and embarrassed to show my new school friends our family home. Further, I was uncomfortable sharing my family status, even though I had a crippled father that remarkably dragged himself faithfully to work each day to provide for that status. Peer pressure then being similar to what it is today, I was extremely thankful that we wore a school uniform. There would be no fashion shows distracting me enviously from my studies.

Collectively, my subconscious life's desires and priorities became the achievement of this worldly model of education, knowledge and prosperity. Those same conditions also became my criteria in mate selection. With these recently ascertained life journey prerequisites, measures, principles or standards, to include companion choosing criteria, there was one matter that had not changed; that would be me. I was the same girl; only now, I had an amplified set of insecurities originated on what I believed to be, the magnitude of my prior lack. I had many mountains to scale to attain my aspirations.

The first mountain I scaled was a move from Canada to the USA. A Canadian friend's contact uncovered a place for me to dwell just off the University of Minnesota's West Bank college campus in Minneapolis. It was a diverse tenement with multifarious efficiencies and one room units that required the sharing of community kitchens and bathrooms. The building's inhabitants comprised and embraced primarily struggling students, starving artists, rebellious hippies, and "in between's"; of whom some may still be contemplating the purpose of their existence to this day.

This tangled yet disorganized setting of needy, lost and confused occupants would often nurture such happenings as group TV watching in the larger

units, as well as other goings-on, to include hallway dart tournaments. Often rushing across the hallway from the stairwell door access to quickly open my efficiency apartment's door, I would find myself dodging these threatening missile releases from the many formidable hallway contenders surmounting their skills to achieve master champion during their respective rivalries.

One such contender, unbeknownst to me at the time, would become my soon to be husband. Apparently through the course of observing my many dashes to safety, he had settled a nuptial determination. His straightaway goal at the time was to become acquainted with me, his future bride. However, none of these thoughts were ever communicated to me, until much, much later; like years later. Through the various tenant group interactions I never really knew that he was even interested in me. He was extremely introspective, loved gadgets and watching Star Trek.

Running out of money between jobs and still wanting to stay in the country a little while longer, I exchanged my more expensive all inclusive efficiency unit for my future husband's low-cost, one room, facility sharing module. In addition, I offered to clean his abode, prepare his meals, and wash the dishes and his laundry, in exchange for food and drink. Not sure of the direction of this vague relationship, and needing to make some responsible choices, I finally elected to move back to Canada.

As I settled back home, acquiring a decent job and establishing a residence, I was soon shocked to receive numerous candid and uninhibited letters from what I thought to be, one very detached individual; you know, the dart throwing neighbor. I recollect that he had even become a little friendlier and even, connected, prior to and during my going away sendoff party. Still, I was now rather perplexed to be accumulating such in-depth communications from an individual that I deemed had very little attraction to me.

One evening after a lengthy phone call which concluded with: "*the sink is full of dishes and my laundry is all dirty*", I hung up the phone thinking that this aloof man had just proposed to me. He spoke intelligently, when you could get him to talk. He was educated and had graduated from college with

a double major in Art and Philosophy. Somehow he had managed to avoid being drafted. I had met his family. They displayed civility, finesse, and refinement. He was an only child of controlling older parents whose conversations developed primarily around congenialities.

Based on my revised mate matching guidelines, he was perfect. He was the exact opposite of me! Our families were dissimilar in so many ways. His family style was restrained, diplomatic and tactful; my family style was loud and verbose. I was the oldest of eight with younger parents; he was an only child of older, more mature parents. His family had a trust fund; I had a family to trust. He had a double major and was a college grad; I had aspirations of college as a high school grad.

Our religions were very similar and yet different. I was raised Catholic; he was raised Lutheran. However, in this hippy era and with his instruction as a philosophy major who knew what our religion would be together. Many say that Canada is very similar to the USA. That fact is true, but there are many cultural differences.

My enamor was captivated by not only the novelty of this new country, but with this man who had already achieved so much of what I wanted from the world, and yet had not attained. After a subsequent phone call to clarify the fact that there was indeed a proposal, my groom-to-be soon materialized in Canada. Following the request of my father and subsequent approval for my hand in marriage, I was transported back across the border to be wedded for happily ever after. Not!

Had I “*FALLEN IN LOVE*”? I do not remember having those specifically described above starry-eyed feeling with my husband. Having just relocated from Canada to the USA, everything was enchanting, enthralling and enticing. Was I just so insecure with myself and swept away in the hidden bad boy charm of his Rhett Butler magnetism? How was it possible for me to believe that he truly wanted to marry someone such as myself? I was holding him in such high regard. What was I bringing to the table? I retained such inflated high esteem and respect for this man’s birthright; comparing all that he could tender in relation to all that I wasn’t? Was that LOVE?

I was not able to make a Godly choice. That skill set was not hanging on my tool belt then. What did I know about *LOVE*? And so, as time elapsed on this not so fairy tale journey, the blacken tarnish began to emerge on my great knight's armor. Disaster erupted as reality set in. Sin reared its ugly head in our wedded bliss' nightmare. Even though each of our elementary religious guidance provided us a form of spiritual groundwork from our respective churches, it was the somber urgency of the certainty of our then current life's critical circumstances that finally crushed what remaining self-sustaining support we, in our respective pride and stubbornness, had clung. These culminating forces finally caused each of us to fall kneeling at the foot of the cross, *SINNERS*, and total strangers.

But GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. Romans 5:8

We were polar opposites; unyielding to “the two shall become one flesh” decree. And yet, we were also very much alike; both strong willed and determined. For a long time, we both had been on a spiritual detour and had lost our way. We required direction, but first we needed *FORGIVENESS*.

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

Yes, the blessing of those harsh inevitabilities assisted us in realizing that we were sinners. The germinated seed of our marriage wherein “the two shall become one flesh” was dying because of our sin; because of our quickly accumulating respective mounds of lack of *FORGIVENESS*. We could no longer stay together in our own strength; in this cesspool of bitterness and resentment.

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

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. Romans 10:9

The best tools in our respective tool belts would be needed to properly construct this wedded house. Now also parents to a baby girl, we were compelled to open the locked doors of our individual hearts, and receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; seeking God's mercy through His *FORGIVENESS*.

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 John 1:9

Had I entered into this relationship for all the wrong reasons? I did not even know who I was; never mind if I *LOVED* someone else, including myself. I didn't even know if I liked myself! I was trying to live through this man's world of experiences; what he had already received or what he had already realized; all aspirations that I had not yet achieved personally.

FOR THY MAKER IS THINE HUSBAND; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. Isaiah 54:5

Now that I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, I became the Bride of Christ. I needed to "*FALL IN LOVE*" with my Groom, Jesus. It was necessary for me to let Him show me who I am and teach me about *FORGIVENESS*. God had already displayed His mercy and *FORGIVENESS* to me through this *LOVE*, Jesus. I now needed to learn how to receive that *FORGIVENESS*. I sought to learn how to *FORGIVE* myself, and then finally learn how to *FORGIVE* others.

³ *INIQUITIES PREVAIL AGAINST ME: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* ⁴ *BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOM THOU CHOOSEST, AND CAUSEST TO APPROACH UNTO THEE, THAT HE MAY DWELL IN THY COURTS: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Psalm 65:3-4*

Understanding *FORGIVENESS* would help me to understand *LOVE*. As I have already described, God has already expressed His *LOVE* to me through His mercy and Salvation released through the death of His Son, Jesus on the cross.

*And WE HAVE KNOWN AND BELIEVED THE LOVE THAT GOD HATH
TO US. GOD IS LOVE; AND HE THAT DWELLETH IN LOVE
DWELLETH IN GOD, AND GOD IN HIM. 1 John 4:16*

On the next leg of this journey, the Holy Spirit would impart to me how to *LOVE* myself as well as how to *LOVE* others. It would be then, and only then, that it would be possible for me to learn to *LOVE* this man, this mystery, my husband. To aid me in accomplishing His will, the Holy Spirit provided me with many resources. Through our local country community church, its members, and various other sources of Christian seminars, Bible studies and fellowship, and as re-enforced during my personal prayer times and Bible lessons, the all-knowing Holy Spirit began to plant the seeds in my Fruit of the Spirit life's garden.

The first seed that the Holy Spirit planted in that garden was *LOVE*; *AGAPE*. God *LOVED* me before I knew Him. He made a way for me to spend eternity with Him. And He expressed that *LOVE* to me when He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for me; to save me and to *FORGIVE* me of all my sin. That is *AGAPE*! As provided in Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the Greek word, *AGAPE* means: ***brotherly LOVE, affection, good will, LOVE, benevolence; LOVE feasts.*** It can be said that *AGAPE LOVE* is ***a selfless love for another that is spiritual and not sexual in nature.*** As with all of our lives, my route has met with a number of confusing trials and detours to this stage. Hence, I have to admit that the road to understanding *LOVE* has been a long expedition. God's *LOVE* is defined in His Word. Specifically, *LOVE* or, *CHARITY*, as used in the King James Bible is:

⁴ *CHARITY (LOVE) SUFFERETH LONG, AND IS KIND; CHARITY (LOVE) ENVIETH NOT; CHARITY (LOVE) VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP,* ⁵ *DOETH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY, SEEKETH NOT HER OWN, IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED, THINKETH NO EVIL;* ⁶ *REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY, BUT REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH;* ⁷ *BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS, HOPETH ALL THINGS, ENDURETH ALL THINGS.* ⁸ *CHARITY (LOVE) NEVER FAILETH ...* ¹³ *And now abideth faith, hope, charity (LOVE),*

these three; but ***THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.*** ¹
Corinthians 13:4-8, 13 (emphasis supplied)

At 24 years of age, married two and one half years, and having just birthed a baby, I realized that my behavior, to my knowledge, demonstrated none of these attributes. We were attempting to build a house on 16 raw wooded acres in the country. Our home in town had sold four times before a closing deal finalized. I was not feeling any *LOVE* except for the miracle of our new baby; total focus and protection of my daughter. Anything that could go wrong, went wrong; and I blamed everything on my spouse. But Your *LOVE*, Jesus is different:

***GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN
HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.*** John 15:13

As I was slowly beginning to grow as His Bride, I began to sense just how much *LOVE* God had for me. His *LOVE* had existed and will continue to exist for all eternity. God chose me to be the Bride of Christ and experience His *LOVE*. The Holy Spirit sought after me to *LOVE* Him. Jesus said in the Word:

³⁷ ... Thou shalt ***LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART,
AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND.*** ³⁸ ***THIS IS THE
FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.*** Matthew 22:37-38

My thoughts at this infantile stage of my Christian walk were racing. “God”, I pondered, “I have just found out that You have *LOVED* me from the beginning of time. You redeemed me as an expression of that *LOVE*. Experiencing Your true *FORGIVENESS* has overwhelmed my current understanding. The desperate and insecure thoughts present in my expedited courtship with my spouse are the same thoughts still present in this same person who was now seeking her new *LOVE*, with You Jesus”. I further reminded God that “we had just start our courtship together; please be patient with me.” And frequently, the Holy Spirit would soothingly whisper to me from His Word, reminding me that I am a new creature:

***Therefore IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE: OLD
THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME***

NEW. 2 Corinthians 5:17

As I purposed in my perfectionism to *LOVE* God with all my heart and soul, and with all my mind and strength, it was readily apparent to both my earthly husband and my Groom, Jesus, that I was weak. My heart wrenching pride, current lack of respect for and condescension displayed towards my hubby was not the *LOVE* harvest the Holy Spirit desired to reap and hence, to be express to my earthly mate. Imploring my everlasting *LOVE*, I professed and still profess that no one has ever *LOVED* and cared for me like this.

... Yea, I HAVE LOVED THEE WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE: therefore WITH LOVINGKINDNESS HAVE I DRAWN THEE. Jeremiah 31:3

The Holy Spirit, however was soon to impart to me that His *LOVE* was even bigger than I could imagine. My expression of His *LOVE* commanded that I not *LOVE* the world. Wasn't that my high school goal? Being of the world, I am, however duty-bound to *LOVE* my spouse, my family, the church, and any and all those that berate me, bear false witness about me through defamation, denigration and disparagement. Didn't Jesus' accuser do the same to Him, as He prepared to offer Himself as our gift of Salvation for all of our sins on the cross He was to hang?

These words probably sound easier expressed on paper than in actual reality. That is in fact true. Obedience hurts sometimes, especially when we are encamped about by the deprecating foul smells often associated with lack of *FORGIVENESS*. There are no air fresheners strong enough to conceal the stench associated with bitterness, hatred, regret, judgment, *CONDEMNATION*, etc.; lack of *FORGIVENES*. However, if God's Word proclaims it, then it is His will for us to purpose to be obedient to His Words in spite of the terror of some of the dismal darkened detoured nights of our separating lack of *FORGIVENESS* journey.

Then SPAKE JESUS again unto them, saying, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE. John 8:12

**Which hope *WE HAVE AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, BOTH SURE
AND STEDFAST ... Hebrews 6:19***

Jesus is our *LIGHT* in the blackness; our *ANCHOR* in the storm. Have we ever had someone promise to be with us like this? We are not required to be a particular individual's best friend, but we are required to hate only the sin, and to *LOVE* and pray for the sinner. We can only accomplish this with God's grace. The Holy Spirit is able to teach us to *FORGIVE* and *LOVE* our neighbor, our earthly mates, our children, just as He is teaching us to *LOVE* ourselves. And still, if those around us continue to be *UNLOVEABLE*, like some of those who are not even our enemies, all the more so, we are to *FORGIVE* and *LOVE* them anyway with His *AGAPE LOVE*.

**And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt *LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS
THYSELF*. Matthew 22:39**

**But I say unto you, *LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, BLESS THEM THAT CURSE
YOU, DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THEM
WHICH DESPITEFULLY USE YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU*; Matthew
5:44**

This will be a lifelong tutorial for each of us; a thorn in the flesh, readily challenged at every turn by the gates of hell. At this juncture, I continue to seek the Holy Spirit's *LOVING* forbearance and mercy. We may not know how to *LOVE* our neighbor, our mates, or anyone else yet with this kind of *AGAPE LOVE*. Notwithstanding, we may still even need to learn to *FORGIVE* and *LOVE* our respective selves. I do know that we can expect the Holy Spirit to hold our hands, and walk with and direct each of us in our Fruit of the Spirit gardens of *LOVE*. As we trust our God, the abundance of His *LOVE* will overflow from within us; *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* through *AGAPE LOVE* for all the world to experience. *His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and *HAVE NOT CHARITY (LOVE)*, I AM BECOME AS SOUNDING BRASS, OR A TINKLING CYMBAL. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and *HAVE NOT CHARITY (LOVE)*, I AM

NOTHING. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and ***HAVE NOT CHARITY (LOVE), IT PROFITETH ME NOTHING.*** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (emphasis supplied)

How can we *LOVE* this unknown God the Father, God the Son, Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit? Where is the desire to *LOVE* and remain married to our mates; or to *FORGIVE* those who have trespassed against us; or bear up under the *CONDEMNATION* of those we may have hurt and/or harmed? If we choose, the Holy Spirit, in His loving woos in this eternal *LOVE* affair, will teach each of us how to *LOVE*, no matter the state of our present journey. He will reveal to us through God's Word that He knows us. He made us and He knew us from the beginning of time. And through the same Word, the Holy Spirit discloses to us that before we knew Him, before we committed our respective lives to Him, He "***HAS***" *LOVED* us with His everlasting *LOVE*. He longs to bestow this *LOVE* upon each of us that we may begin *FLOURISHING* in *FORGIVENESS* within His Fruit of the Spirit garden.

¹⁴ I will praise thee; for ***I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE: MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS; AND THAT MY SOUL KNOWETH RIGHT WELL.*** ¹⁵ ***MY SUBSTANCE WAS NOT HID FROM THEE, WHEN I WAS MADE IN SECRET,*** and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. ¹⁶ ***THINE EYES DID SEE MY SUBSTANCE, YET BEING UNPERFECT; AND IN THY BOOK ALL MY MEMBERS WERE WRITTEN, WHICH IN CONTINUANCE WERE FASHIONED,*** when as yet there was none of them. Psalm 139:14-16

... Yea, ***I HAVE LOVED THEE WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE: therefore WITH LOVINGKINDNESS HAVE I DRAWN THEE.*** Jeremiah 31:3

CHAPTER 3

JOY

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, *JOY*, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

JOY IS LOVE EXULTANT

Are we feeling *JOYFUL* today? Is the *JOY* of the Lord our strength? Or, are we stuck in a rut? Does the scene around us appear to have lost its brilliant hues? Are there more shadows and dull grey tones in the rusted out junkyards of our respective lives these days than the sparkle, shimmer and shine associated with *JOYFULITY*? Is there nothing around us that brings us *JOY*? Are we at least *HAPPY* or *GLAD*? How about a smile or a *JOYFUL* memory: a birthday, a wedding, a Christmas, a Thanksgiving, or maybe an anniversary?

I recall my husband surprising me with a party for my thirtieth birthday. Yes, he aspired to give me a *HAPPY* birthday. Gazing through the pine trees as we pulled into our 900 foot country driveway, of our then, 16 acre homestead, after being whisked away earlier to alleviate any possible surprise social suspicions, I noticed something rather unusual on the front lawn of our home. Was I perceiving a mirage through the trees or had a carnival erected itself thereupon?

Drawing closer to the detached garage situated several hundred feet from our home, what appeared to be fair rides in reality materialized to be streams of toilet paper dangling, draping, and drooping from and throughout the evergreens immediately surrounding our family dwelling. Walking up the driveway from the garage and nearing the house, we observed a celebratory birthday sign posted above the front yard gate.

Added to this apparent *JOYFULNESS* was our adorable darling daughter, performing her latest ballet dance recital paces; pirouetting and pliéing about the front yard in her tutu. She was also in anxious anticipation of her sixth birthday to be celebrated the next day.

A few close friends from church had encouraged my hubby to host a surprise birthday celebration for me. However, he definitely was not informed of the fact that there would be festoon chamber pot streamers suspended and swaying from the fir trees. Nevertheless, he was aware of a small problem that the festivity planners had not anticipated. In the plotting and preparation, my husband had picked up the custom ordered birthday cake the evening prior to the secret fiesta. Looking over his shoulder, as he placed the delectable dainty in the household refrigerator, I sleuthed a sneak peek. How thoughtful, and oh, how yummy looking. I imagined the family taking pleasure in this tantalizing treat the following day after one of our meals together.

Awaking early my birthday morning, I commenced the family Saturday morning breakfast ritual. However, upon opening the refrigerator, I again caught sight of the scrummy looking frosting coated birthday cake. After about a one minute ponder, I theorized that because it was my day, I could consume whatever I fancied for breakfast. No longer able to control my desire, I dared to devour that delectably desirable, deliciously delightful, lip-smacking sugary sweet of a delicacy for my breakfast. What was my other half to say or do, as he entered the kitchen to refill his coffee cup, catching sight of me sitting at the breakfast bar, already half devouring this tempting and tantalizing treat? At that moment, his classical marginal expression of body language response was critical so as to not let the cat out of the bag. He had never planned a celebration gathering before, so I certainly wasn't expecting one this time.

That was a *HAPPY* time. Getting married was an exciting and *HAPPY* time. The births of our two children were *HAPPY* and *JOYFUL* times. However *HAPPINESS* is not sustaining; and being *JOYFUL* had not been part of my past repertoire. Come to think of it, it was not part of my mate's repertoire either. Webster's dictionary defines *HAPPINESS* as: ***a state of well-being characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense JOY;***

emotions experienced when in a state of well-being; an agreeable feeling or condition of the soul arising from good fortune or propitious happening of any kind; the state of being HAPPY; contentment; JOYFUL satisfaction. (emphasis supplied)

From tot to teen, I either recall in actuality, or perhaps because of my father's continual recitation, his relentless teasing for me "not to trip over my lip". In other words, I will assume that I must have been a pouter. But in reality, was I really so *UNHAPPY* or, must I have been a very pensive child? Was it possible that I was a creation in deep thought; trying to solve my big world's problems at such a fledgling age? Looking back from a more mature perspective and in consideration of the many years that I have lived with myself, I will attribute this behavior to my temperament. What do I know? I can affirm that I was not a *HAPPY* or *JOYFUL CHILD*. The older I became, the more problems I pondered. Even today, if I do not keep my mind in check, my thoughts could find me embracing any number of topics. Without a doubt, a minor investigation of today's world of varying crises, could easily have me ruminating on such, never mind local issues, or those concerns right here under my own roof, for that matter.

Now take my disposition and combine that in marriage with an only child who also has the same propensity for ponder. You may recall from my earlier writings that my mate is an artist and was a philosophy major in college. And so through wedded bliss, "the two shall become one flesh"; did we? The sum of this particular permutation coupled two pensive people pre-absorbed in probing the most prosaic to prodigious of presuppositions. As you can imagine, there was not a lot of *JOY* in our home.

Intermingle that with the barricades or blockades established around each of our respective hearts. You may now begin to understand how the seed of Biblical *TRUTH*, "the two shall become one flesh" was having a hard time breaking forth from its protective shell in order to take root in our relationship. Even after accepting Jesus as our Savior and experiencing the *EXULTANT JOY* of redemption, there still was not much *JOY* in our presence. With the imperfections of our sinful nature prior to accepting Christ, yoked with dissimilar backgrounds and divergent reactions and responses, each varying contrarily with each new difficulty, that full tank of

JOY that we each had taken hold of at the cross, somehow acquired a slow leak that necessitated mending. How was that possible?

And *YE BECAME FOLLOWERS OF US, AND OF THE LORD*, having received the word in much affliction, *WITH JOY OF THE HOLY GHOST*. 1
Thessalonians 1:6

Maybe as baby Christians, we had not yet grasped the *TRUTH* essential to ensure sustaining *JOY*; to receiving and maintaining the gift of *JOY* by the Holy Spirit as applied through the Word.

RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF THY SALVATION; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Psalm 51:12

As provided in Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the word: “*chara*” means: *JOY, GLADNESS, the JOY received from you, the cause or occasion of JOY, of persons who are one’s JOY*. Based on this defined designation, I will conclude that *HAPPINESS* is extracted more so as a result of expressed emotions; whereas *JOY* and *GLADNESS* are comprehended more in the form of inner contentment. In assessment of our marriage relationship experience and grounded on my understanding of *JOY, GLADNESS*, and *HAPPINESS*, when evidenced, I will conclude that what was expressed in my marriage at the time was more the emotional manifestation of *HAPPINESS* and not the enduring, yet radiating *JOY* of the Lord.

I have been confronted with heartache and have wept many tears due to loss, dejection and disloyalty. I often would deliberate with burning envy, as I would gauge other married couples actually *ENJOYING* each other’s company. Analyzing and dissecting each move as they lovingly held hands, cherishingly stole tender kisses or imparted an adoring caress or hug, I did not recall ever interacting in such fashion with my spouse. I spent many years pondering why we did not have that type of relationship. Due to some pre-marital encounters, I was not always convinced of the undivided devotion of the salesman’s heart residing within my mate. Maybe my insecurities were still simmering forth. I would often gist, perchance there be an occurrence of such disloyalty, that subsequent to such an event, a shot gun welcome home greeting might enthusiastically salute him in the

driveway. To my knowledge, an actual physical betrayal never occurred. We never did own a shot gun.

I cannot speak for my spouse but I can attest to the fact that I did coexisted with him; oftentimes feeling completely hollow within. Had lack of courtship and diverse foundational realities, left me feeling alone, void of the “two shall become one flesh” anointing of our marriage? The relational truth of this potential reality was already crushing my clenched, crestfallen heart, constricting within my chest. I was desperate and depressed. Many endure this same pain in their respective marriages. That same sense of abandonment, desertion, and loneliness may also be felt by parents or children, or brothers or sister, and/or friends, due to the lack of *FORGIVENESS*. I entreated the Holy Spirit for an outpouring of His *JOY*; a *JOY* that could only be provided by Him into my Fruit of the Spirit garden.

AND NOW COME I TO THEE; and these things I speak in the world, THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE MY JOY FULFILLED IN THEMSELVES. John 17:13

Today, God has imparted to me through His Word that He too has wept. Yes, He wept over the disloyalty of His Bride, Israel.

³ but THOU HAST PLAYED THE HARLOT WITH MANY LOVERS; YET RETURN AGAIN TO ME, saith the Lord ... ²⁰ Surely AS A WIFE TREACHEROUSLY DEPARTETH FROM HER HUSBAND, so have YE DEALT TREACHEROUSLY WITH ME, O house of Israel, SAITH THE LORD. ²¹ A VOICE WAS HEARD upon the high places, WEEPING ... for they have perverted their way, and THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN THE LORD THEIR GOD. Jeremiah 3: 3, 20-21

... for I WILL FORGIVE their iniquity, AND I will REMEMBER THEIR SIN NO MORE. Jeremiah 31:34

Almighty God wept over the perverted ways of His Chosen. Yet God, in His infinite mercy, *FORGAVE* and remembered their sin no more. Jesus too wept before His death when he looked out over Jerusalem:

And WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT, Luke 19:41

Jesus wept over my rebellion also, even as He wept over His Bride, Israel; my sins that would nail Him to the cross. Yet in His infinite mercy, He *FORGAVE* me and remembers my sins no more. Although all may have been instrumental, it would not be my spouse or things or people that would teach me about *JOY*. It would be the Holy Spirit Who would introduce me to the true meaning of *JOY*. Further, the Spirit would instruct me in how to trust Him and maintain His sustaining *JOY* in my Fruit of the Spirit garden. However, there is a price that one must pay for rebellion and lack of *GRATITUDE* for all of God's many myriads of blessings.

⁶² ... *BECAUSE THOU Wouldest NOT OBEY THE VOICE OF THE LORD THY GOD.* ⁶³ And it shall come to pass, that *AS THE LORD REJOICED OVER YOU TO DO YOU GOOD*, and to multiply you; *SO THE LORD WILL REJOICE OVER YOU TO DESTROY YOU, AND TO BRING YOU TO NOUGHT ...* Deuteronomy 28:62-63

⁴⁷ Because thou *SERVEDST NOT THE LORD THY GOD WITH JOYFULNESS, AND WITH GLADNESS OF HEART, FOR THE ABUNDANCE OF ALL THINGS;* ⁴⁸ Therefore shalt *THOU SERVE THINE ENEMIES WHICH THE LORD SHALL SEND AGAINST THEE*, in *HUNGER*, and in *THIRST*, and in *NAKEDNESS*, and in *WANT OF ALL THINGS*: and *HE SHALL PUT A YOKE OF IRON UPON THY NECK, UNTIL HE HAVE DESTROYED THEE.* Deuteronomy 28:47-48

We take a lot for granted in this country, don't we? Even the abundance of a flourishing career left me void of feeling anything but self-loathing and shallowness because of my disobedience and lack of continued personal walk with the Lord. Why was I not *EXULTANT* and overwrought with *GRATITUDE*? As His Word says, there is never a *JOYFUL* outcome when rebellion and lack of *GRATITUDE* are present.

I say unto you, that likewise *JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH*, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Luke 15:7

Enough was enough. I abandoned my accomplishing and lucrative cavity of a career with the intent of refocusing my attention on God's will for my life. In the absence of a *JOYFUL* relationship with my husband, I would now

focus my attention on finding the *JOY* of the Lord. Although not apparent to me at the time, the Potter was still at work within me; performing His perfect work. After all, Jesus did promise never to leave or forsake me.

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5

I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28: 20

After relocating back to a place wherein I had once meet such sweet fellowship with the Lord, I was starting to question where Jesus was, and where was His *EXULTANT JOY* I so desired to attain? There I was, in the midst of menopause, repenting, asking, seeking and knocking. And yet, in all my repenting, asking, seeking and knocking, I still found myself often focused on self, and not seeing His beams of Light. Nevertheless, in His infinite mercy, God was actually breaking, melting and molding this jar of clay; fashioning me with the seal of His workmanship.

For *HIS ANGER ENDURETH BUT A MOMENT; IN HIS FAVOUR IS LIFE: WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.* Psalm 30:5

As the stripping continued, I did not perceive the potential for a changing reality as related to my son and his little family. Part of my *JOY* seeking caused me to draw closer to the healing and restoration of family relations. However, as tests would have it, a misunderstanding occurred that resulted in a break in our little family's future communications. My granddaughter had just been born, and to this point, I had been *ENJOYING* weekly visits with her brother, my grandson. I was fragmented by this unexpected turn of events.

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.* Hebrew 12:11

Many years have passed on this journey to *JOY*. It has only been in recent years that I can now articulate my current understanding of the Biblical meaning of and my actual receiving of the Fruit of the Spirit seed of *JOY* as affectionately planted in my heart's garden by the Holy Spirit. Freedom

from *CONDEMNATION* was one of the many steps required as *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* began to erupt within my *JOY* filled Fruit of the Spirit garden.

THE VOICE OF JOY, AND the voice of GLADNESS, THE VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM, AND THE VOICE OF THE BRIDE, the voice of them that SHALL SAY, PRAISE THE LORD OF HOSTS: FOR THE LORD IS GOOD; FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER: and of them that shall BRING THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ...
Jeremiah 33:11

And so in my brokenness, in the Master's melting and molding, was birthed another step, my *GRATITUDE BOOK*. Every evening before going to sleep, I would recall and journal the many events of the day. I had a choice. Was I going to focus on the negative, or was I going to rejoice in the positive as I trusted in my God?

THOU WILT SHEW ME THE PATH OF LIFE: IN THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY; AT THY RIGHT HAND THERE ARE PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE. Psalm 16:11

Purposing to concentrate on my many blessings, I would ignore the diverse false accusations and guilty *CONDEMNATIONS* from Satan as related to my family or anything or one else. God had *FORGIVEN* me. I was learning to receive and give *FOR-GIVENESS*. I asked my adult children for *FORGIVENESS*. The acts of giving *FORGIVENESS* to me and receiving *FORGIVENESS* from Him were now between them and God.

When we listen to the appreciation and *GRATITUDE* of those who have visited this country, and those who have migrated to and sought refuge here; when we strip away all the glittering blinders and actually experience the reality of the many myriads of blessings taken for granted by the multitude born in this great country; and when we consider the bare bone requirements fundamentally necessary for survival as now acknowledged and suffered by those devastated in the economic collapses as of late in this abundant country, one begins to not only witness, but hail with *EXULTANT JOY*, the bountiful provision of our God. In praise and adoring *GRATITUDE*, it is only then, that one may truly arise, and with sincere

acceptance, experience the release and receipt of this Fruit of the Spirit, *JOY*.

***THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD; MY HEART TRUSTED
IN HIM, AND I AM HELPED: THEREFORE MY HEART GREATLY
REJOICETH; AND WITH MY SONG WILL I PRAISE HIM. Psalm 28:7***

I am reminded of the *GRATITUDE* of a beggar named Lazarus. He was grateful to receive his sustenance from the crumbs falling from a rich man's table. Eating there with the dogs, he was also grateful for the healing balm of the dogs' saliva as they licked his bodily lesions and pustules. He was *JOYFUL* for these blessings. His reward at death for this expression of *EXULTANT GRATITUDE* and praise; *JOY* in the bosom of Abraham.

***¹⁹ There was A CERTAIN RICH MAN, which ... FARED SUMPTUOUSLY
EVERY DAY: ²⁰ And there was A CERTAIN BEGGAR NAMED LAZARUS,
WHICH WAS LAID AT HIS GATE, FULL OF SORES ²¹ And DESIRING
TO BE FED WITH THE CRUMBS WHICH FELL FROM THE RICH
MAN'S TABLE: MOREOVER THE DOGS CAME AND LICKED HIS
SORES. ²² ... THE BEGGAR DIED, AND WAS CARRIED BY THE
ANGELS INTO ABRAHAM'S BOSOM ... Luke 16:19-22***

Adjusting my focus, I purposed to *REJOICE* in and over the simple, uncomplicated matters of life. It is amazing what bounty our God truly provides when we spend a bit of time cleaning our spectacles. Such bounties may include: clean water to drink; clothes to wear; a bed to sleep in; a roof over our head; air conditioning and heat when required; a free country to pray and worship God; those eager to defend and protect; and most important of all, *FORGIVENESS* from a merciful God.

***²² AND YE NOW THEREFORE HAVE SORROW: BUT I WILL SEE YOU
AGAIN, AND YOUR HEART SHALL REJOICE, AND YOUR JOY NO MAN
TAKETH FROM YOU. ²³ AND IN THAT DAY YE SHALL ASK ME
NOTHING. VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WHATSOEVER YE
SHALL ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE WILL GIVE IT YOU. ²⁴
HITHERTO HAVE YE ASKED NOTHING IN MY NAME: ASK, AND YE
SHALL RECEIVE, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL. John 16:22-24***

Yes, we may now have sorrow in the disaster of a detachment, a severed relationship or existing not as “the two shall become one flesh”, but by the divine revelation found in His Word and in the power of praise, we may now choose to worship and *REJOICE* in God! By obeying and following His directions, we may gratefully learn to love and to trust Him during this season and always. His *LIGHT* will appear at the end of the tunnel. By concentrating on the positive of His promises found in His Word and not entertaining the negative lies from the gates of hell, these same promises planned by God and paid for by the blood of Jesus will change every aspect of our lives; if we choose.

***WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE; IN WHOM, THOUGH NOW YE
SEE HIM NOT, YET BELIEVING, YE REJOICE WITH JOY
UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY: 1 Peter 1:8***

The changes will probably appear more from within than from without, and will most definitely not transpire within our pre-prescribed time frames. However, Jesus tells us to ask, and the answer will come; and we will *REJOICE*! How does one have *EXHULTANT JOY* and *REJOICE* when everything that is most dear to them is being stripped away or never existed? The answer again is *GRATITUDE* and praise.

And as my historic measurement of lack decreased, the divine measurement of abundance increased; rooted in *GRATITUDE*; the product, *JOY*. Attempting to purge unnecessary clutter, while still listening, hoping and having faith in Jesus, I began rereading some of my personal library treasures. In that refreshing, I was reminded again how Jesus left His riches of heaven, to live His life here on earth as an example to us. He did not hire a moving van for His muddle of belongings as He travelled from locale to locale. Matter of fact, I do not remember any mention of Jesus’ belongings. In fact, after he left His riches in heaven, wasn’t He birthed in a borrowed stable? Didn’t He preach from a borrowed boat? Wasn’t the colt that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on, borrowed? And did our Lord not eat the Last Supper in a borrowed upper room? Where was He buried? Wasn’t Jesus buried in a borrowed tomb? He had the clothes on His back. The Word of God says:

... the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Luke 9:58

If He had a need, He asked His Father, and His Father provided it for Him. That is the essence of *GRATITUDE* and *EXHULTANT JOY*. I was now beginning to comprehend that the many events previously discussed, had in reality been the gestation period, for what now was the birth of my God anointed Fruit of the Spirit - *JOY*. Don't get lost in the forfeiture of stuff when we can praise and *REJOICE*; *FLOURISHING* in the abundant, victorious, provision of the Spirit. Stay focused on Him! Don't sink as Peter did when he took his eyes off Jesus as he walked on the water. Although we may not temporarily be able to understand or be able to see Him in the storm, Jesus did promise never to leave or forsake us.

¹⁴ Sing, o daughter of Zion; shout, o Israel; *BE GLAD AND REJOICE WITH ALL THE HEART*, O daughter of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ *THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY THY JUDGMENTS, HE HATH CAST OUT THINE ENEMY ... even THE LORD, IS IN THE MIDST OF THEE: THOU SHALT NOT SEE EVIL ANY MORE ...* ¹⁷ *THE LORD THY GOD IN THE MIDST OF THEE IS MIGHTY; HE WILL SAVE, HE WILL REJOICE OVER THEE WITH JOY; HE WILL REST IN HIS LOVE, HE WILL JOY OVER THEE WITH SINGING ...* ¹⁹ *... I WILL UNDO ALL THAT AFFLICT THEE: and I WILL SAVE HER THAT HALTETH, AND GATHER HER THAT WAS DRIVEN OUT; AND I WILL GET THEM PRAISE AND FAME IN EVERY LAND WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN PUT TO SHAME.* Zephaniah 3:14-17,
19

The Holy Spirit fixed the leak. No longer is my *JOY* in the Lord dispelled with every new earthly trial. By God's grace, I am now more alert to the wiles of the devil trying to steal my *JOY*; not my *JOY* but His *EXULTANT JOY*, my *JOY* in Him.

*THOU HAST TURNED FOR ME MY MOURNING INTO DANCING;
THOU HAST PUT OFF MY SACKCLOTH, AND GIRDED ME WITH
GLADNESS; Psalm 30:11*

It will not be people or places or things that will bring us *JOY*. Through the Word of God, our obedience, *GRATITUDE*, praise, and *FORGIVENESS*, the Holy Spirit will be enabled to cause *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* to

sprout into view within our Fruit of the Spirit gardens. This Fruit of *JOY* will erupt forth, empowering us in direct proportion to our knowing, thanking, praising and serving God. Only through our deep, abiding communion with Him will we be endowed with the inner *REJOICING* that can then be channeled through us to the world we touched. *His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

... FOR THE LORD WILL AGAIN REJOICE OVER THEE FOR GOOD ...

Deuteronomy 30:9

***... AS THE BRIDEGROOM REJOICETH OVER THE BRIDE, SO SHALL
THY GOD REJOICE OVER THEE. Isaiah 62:5***

***THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT MY JOY MIGHT
REMAIN IN YOU, AND THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL. John 15:11***

Longingly awaiting our return to Him, the Spirit seeks to put off our sackcloth; adorning us with His *GLADNESS*. He wills to *REJOICE* over us. Desiring that His *JOY* remain in us and that we might remain abundantly full, the Holy Spirit summons that the *JOY* of all that He is, be our every strength. What will we choose; our *GRATITUDE* frosted with His *JOY*? *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* in our Fruit of the Spirit gardens.

***... THIS DAY IS HOLY UNTO OUR LORD: NEITHER BE YE SORRY; FOR
THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH. Nehemiah 8:10***

CHAPTER 4

PEACE

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, ***PEACE***, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

PEACE IS LOVE IN REPOSE

How is our *PEACE* today? Have we recently lost our job? Is the bank preparing to repossess and/or foreclose on our house? Maybe the car just broke down and there are no funds in savings to repair it. Possibly, our kids are either arguing with us or are not talking to us at all. Are they proceeding to suspend our driver's license because we are in arrears with child support? Apparently, there is no *PEACE* to be found and we may feel as though we are on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Does any of this sound familiar?

Divinely ordered as the eldest child of eight in a very dynamic Irish extraction, our family unit exhibited an energetic environment that postured many opposing opportunities. The consequences and conclusions of those confronts were not always *PEACEFUL*. Our Catholic upbringing disciplined us in the importance of *FORGIVENESS*; an essential precondition to survive in our somewhat crowded and sometimes contentious climate.

To provide for our three bedrooms, one bath, spirited humble abode, both of my parents worked; dad days, and mom, nursing at night. Situated in a post-World War II city expansion district, our modest home was positioned approximately mid track length from either corner on a rather quiet, and yet discreet thoroughfare. Initially, the neighborhood reception was more than

welcoming until children, bicycles and toys of all shapes and sizes began overrunning their well-manicured lawns, walkways and street.

Windows were accidentally broken as ball playing talents were perfected in the alleyway. Backyard crabapple trees were robbed of their sour fruit; and new paths were forged in the annexing of shortcuts through the easily accessible groomed yards. Combined with this disarray, echoed the evening supper call. Standing on the front stoop, I would systematical shout out each child's name; rounding up the scattered and tattered motley crew from the surrounding streets and households; adding further to our already chagrined community's current annoyance.

To append insult to injury, a second arousing evening bellow would follow several hours later summoning the same lot in for the nightly bedtime roll call. If all of this madness had not already exacerbated the adjoining tranquility pursued by the surrounding domiciles, consider the continuous slamming within and without of our household's doors and the trials associated with settling the screaming pandemonium into slumber land shush and stillness.

The neighborhood had been taken over by the "*MARSHALL's*", and there would be *NO MORE PEACE*. Our home environment offered one bedroom for my parents, occupied intermittently by each due to their varying work shifts; a second bedroom divvied up by four boys in two bunk beds; and a third bedroom strategically apportioned up by four girls to include a bunk bed, a crib and a smaller bed. During this time, my youngest sister was a toddler and tended to sleep with one of the sisters or, with mom working nights, she slept with dad. It was the one bathroom that provided ample occasions for all to demonstrate their respective negotiation skills as each strategized and compromised for a *PEACEFUL* and hopefully *FORGIVING* resolve for their respective allotted requirements.

The resourcefulness associated with this model of upbringing afforded plenteous possibilities to cultivate the proficiencies, used by the grace of God, to guide and refine each family member to whom they respectfully are today. As a result, a life of *PEACEFUL* structure and control became paramount in and for my order. In my earlier life's wander, the wiles of the

devil had popped out of too many past closets. As elaborated in the *LOVE* chapter of this book, my initial encounters with my husband, as we mollycoddled together in our group gathering tenement habitation, were embroidered with the anti-war, free-love, *PEACE* pre-suppositions of that generation's interlude. In fact, one noteworthy attraction that drew me to my mate was his projection of an easygoing, *PEACEABLE*, relaxed, tranquil, and confident carriage of himself not only from within, but without to those around him.

After our nuptials, we, okay, I did not truly comprehend the meaning of *REPOSE* or *PEACE*. Childhood family negotiations were often agreed upon through a fist-a-cuffs resolve. In addition, I had a world to conquer with my partner's credentials. There would be no *PEACE* in my mind, his life or anywhere else, until that surmount was mastered. What was this *PEACEABLE*, conflict avoiding, only child, companion going to do?

THERE IS NO PEACE, says the LORD, UNTO THE WICKED. Isaiah 48:22

DECEIT IS IN THE HEART OF THEM THAT IMAGINE EVIL: but to the counsellors of PEACE is joy. Proverbs 12:20

The Greek word for *PEACE*, "[*eirene*](#)", is defined in Thayer's Greek Lexicon as: ***PEACE between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord; security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because PEACE and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous).*** (emphasis supplied) Based on what I have previously shared in relation to my rearing, one may have already presupposed that I had learned at a very early age how to push people's buttons to elicit a particular response.

Throughout the life of my marriage, I believe I have only witnessed my spouse lose his *PEACE* twice. The first disruption occurred several months after our marriage. I will not expand on that particular provoke. However, I will admit to assessing, exasperating and trying my spouse's *PEACEABLE* status from the onset of our marriage. No one can be that cool, that *REPOSED* or that *PEACEABLE*. There must be something I could do to throw him off balance; to lose his *PEACE*. My mate was just way too composed and collected; unlike any one that I had ever before experienced. We had not courted long enough before our nuptials for me to have had a

timely test run of rattling his composure cage. Most people false advertise when they are “a-courtin” anyway. My groom appeared to be numb to every button that I could imagine to press. Either that or his civilized upbringing facilitated him the ability to master his proficiency at suppressing his emotions and persevering at his *PEACEABLE* stance.

Eventually, after about three years of marriage, a match had been set and a second eruption occurred. The *PEACEABLE* and *REPOSED* façade would crack. Following the birth of our baby girl, the loss of a job while trying to build a house, and my younger brother’s recent presence and residence in our home, the manipulation of two button pushers under one roof eventually powered my other half into a fist-a-cuffs stance against my college bound sibling.

FOR TO BE CARNALLY MINDED IS DEATH; BUT TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE. Romans 8:6

We had recently accepted Christ as our Savior and we, okay, I had much to learn about *PEACE* on this new spiritual journey. Although my spouse maintained a *PEACEABLE* veneer with each passing day, I do not think I ever gave him the gift of *PEACE*. I desired the serenity of an unflustered atmosphere, but my flesh imagined an interpersonal challenge at every turn.

After a week of daily two hour driving through any fashion of seasonal northwest inclement weather to and from the city, and the stresses of salesmanship to provide for his family, my poor husband would be greeted each weekend with an endless “honey do” list. If it was not finishing one of the many household projects, it was rototilling the garden, clearing the driveway of snow, etc. Maybe he had a little *PEACE* when he was alone in our woods, scouting, trimming, cutting and hauling 10-12 cords of firewood for our winter heating supply.

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU. LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED, NEITHER LET IT BE AFRAID. [John 14:27](#)

During this period of our marriage, the country and the economy floundered. Jobs were not as secure as they once were. The rural

northwestern part of the country always seems to struggle a little harder for it livelihood. Gas shortages plagued the nation, and interest rates were approaching 18 percent. One never knew when the company they worked for may be bought out and/or a job would be eliminated. That happened to us several times. Every time we would purchase the Sunday paper, and I would peruse the *WANT ADS* in search of my husband's next job. With his credentials, I could only imagine what this very contented man, could become through my guidance.

I was on the move: dreaming, figuring, planning and strategizing. My spouse would often say he knew that he lost me for the night if I appeared with a calculator in hand. Where could we go; what could we become? He would have been happy to stay in his Midwest family town; but no, I wanted a new beginning, back to the land, on our own, a place for our little family to grow; until I would grasped the next dream by the tail.

A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but *ENVY THE ROTTENNESS OF THE BONES*. Proverbs 14:30

Without the *PEACE* of God operating in my life, appropriating the tools provided by the Holy Spirit through the Fruit of the Spirit, it would not entail much for me to allow adversity to erupt and unsettle what little *REPOSE* I had at the time. For me, life often became rattled and shaken, to my poor mate's chagrin. Not only was I tormented and knocked right off my game, but so was the radiating effect of my lack of *PEACE* on my husband's residential *PEACE*. I needed Jesus' *PEACE*. When I received mercy and *FORGIVENESS* at the cross, I was informed through His Word that:

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 1:20

Therefore, *BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:* Romans 5:1

Such a price had been paid for my Salvation. When was I going to grasp and understand this third FRUIT of the SPIRIT; this *PEACE*? The word, *PEACE*, may be found in the King James Version of the New Testament at least 18 times when coupled with “grace and *PEACE*”; with a “*mercy*” in there on occasion. My personal trek to finding this *PEACE* and *REPOSE* would not be a short one. I was like Jacob who wrestled with and had his hip broken by the angel. I needed to have my hip broken a few more times. I liked the challenge; the wrestle!

The fact is, God always wins! That lesson slogged a while in my learning process. I am frequently reminded of Who is in charge, should my thinking take an unexpected turn. I know my mate endured many years, tolerating my lack of *PEACE*. Was he really so *FORGIVING*, or was his childhood acquired talent of suppressing his emotions just so completely in control? It would only be the result of me choosing to *FORGIVE*, and choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to fertilize and cultivate His Wisdom fruit of *PEACE* into my life that the sprouts of *PEACE* would begin to finally emerge in my spiritual Fruit of the Spirit garden.

Grace and *PEACE* BE MULTIPLIED UNTO YOU THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and of Jesus our Lord, 2 Peter 1:2

By memorizing and hiding God’s Word in my heart, my mind became more stayed on Him. But in order to receive this nurturing, I would need to make the choice as to the thoughts I would entertain in order to maintain *PEACE*.

THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD, Ephesians 5:26

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*

Renewing this old mind could only be achieved by disciplining my choice of thoughts to be reflective of the mind of Christ. As I submit to the Holy Spirit, He would purify me by washing my mind with His Word. Through His Wisdom, the Holy Spirit grants me understanding of the need for and

requirements of His armor, found in Ephesians 6. By meditating on the Word of God, I would finally begin to be delivered from the chaos and confusion found in the deep and not so deep uproar and analysis that ruminated through the recesses of my mind; *FORGIVING*, and letting go and letting God finally release me into His everlasting Fruit of the Spirit garden of *PEACE*.

**For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but
WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. 1 Corinthians 2:16**

**LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS:
Philippians 2:5**

Dressing in God's sandals of *PEACE*, custom designed by Him for me from His suit of armor, would initiate the steps wherein I would finally begin to recognize the *PEACE* and *REPOSE* that passes all understanding. It would be the choice of having the mind of Christ, thinking His thoughts and meditating on His ways that would deliver me from the torments of the gates of hell into my *FLOURISHING* Fruit of the Spirit garden wherein was beginning to thrive the fruit of His *PEACE*.

**And YOUR FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL
OF PEACE; Ephesians 6:15**

**And LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, to the which
also ye are called in one body; and BE YE THANKFUL. [Colossians 3:15](#)**

**THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND IS
STAYED ON THEE: BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE. Isaiah 26:2-4**

**And THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING,
SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS:
Philippians 4:7**

PEACE must come from within, our choice, a gift from the Holy Spirit, and not, as I had so demanded, from my all those around me. The Spirit's' application of His healing balm of *PEACE* can only be received through our obedience. This choice of obedience, to include *FORGIVENESS*, releases the power of the Holy Spirit through the Fruit of the Spirit. As His Word

flows up into our minds, our souls, and our emotions, it produces healing *PEACE* within and sometimes without.

Do we crave the *PEACE* and *REPOSE* of God Whose *PEACE* surpasses all human understanding? Throughout this earthly trek, the Spirit of God promises to walk with us; holding our hands and empowering us with His *PEACE*. At the onslaught of the next fleshly prodding or meddling pokes from the gates of hell, we have the power to claim His resident *PEACE* within us.

Now *THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YE MAY ABOUND IN HOPE, THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST.* Romans 15:13

Let us choose to think His thoughts amidst the libel and slander, and the lies and negative words vented against us. Let us no longer entertain the distracting and disturbing thoughts designed to destroy. With His strength, let us decide to concentrate on what is good and right and just and pure; with *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* within His Fruit of the Spirit garden of *PEACE*.

⁸ Finally, brethren, *WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS.* ⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: *AND THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU.* Philippians 4:8-9

For our own survival and for the survival of those around us, we must choose His *PEACE*. No matter the estrangements and/or lack of *FORGIVENESS*, give and receive clemency and reconciliation. No matter what our circumstances may appear to be at this juncture of our ever changing life, choose the Fruit of the Spirit garden of *PEACE*. Give and receive *PEACE*. Even as the next cataclysmic wave appears to be submerging us, remember *PEACE* is only possible with the mind of God. Think on His thoughts and experience His *REST*. Exhale the lies from hell

and inhale His *PEACE* that passes ALL understanding. We must through our *BLESSED RESOLVE* raise our hands in *PEACE*. Remember, Jesus is our *ANCHOR* in the storm. The destruction encamped about us may steal everything from us, but our soul and our *PEACE* belong to God. The Holy Spirit has begun a good work in us and He will complete it in spite of the lies that may be surrounding us.

... but *MY KINDNESS SHALL NOT DEPART FROM THEE, NEITHER SHALL THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED, SAITH THE LORD THAT HATH MERCY ON THEE.* Isaiah 54:10

CHAPTER 5

LONGSUFFERING/PATIENCE

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, *LONGSUFFERING*, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meek-ness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

LONG SUFFERING or PATIENCE IS LOVE ENDURING

Are we *PATIENTLY ENDURING* as the wreckage due to lack of *FORGIVENESS* continue to smash against the shores of our life? Maybe we are infuriated with God, and all humans implicated and responsible for our existing shambles? Has the snail's pace to resolve further enraged within us an impetus to avenge the wrongs forged against us? Are we left pondering whether God is really hearing our pleas for mercy and provision; a respite in the storm perhaps; a waving of some magical wand to end the pain and make everything better, *NOW*. The world demands everything from us, *NOW*; where is our "*NOW*" resource?

The Greek word for *LONGSUFFERING* - "*makrothumia*" is defined in Thayer's Greek Lexicon as: *PATIENCE, ENDURANCE, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance; PATIENCE, forbearance, LONGSUFFERING, slowness in avenging wrongs*. (emphasis supplied) As I read this definition, the first word that jumps out at me is the word *PATIENCE*. Hmmm, I wonder why that might be?

It might be because my *PATIENCE*, but for the grace of God, was not part of my skill set, tool box, or naturally birthed platform, as some others may have more easily and inherently been endowed or employ. Remember, I had

a world to conquer and that challenge was to be mastered yesterday. As mentioned earlier, through my high school tutorial, I had experienced a fresh awakening to all the worldly opportunities that may be afforded an individual by and through academics, success and riches.

Rags to riches were the *IMPATIENT* goals of my mission! Now, with my newly paired mate at my side, empowered with the earthly seeds of some of my desire already planted and reaping partial harvest in his life, the goal post of attainment could not be far ahead.

***REST IN THE LORD, and WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM: FRET NOT
THYSELF BECAUSE OF HIM WHO PROSPERETH IN HIS WAY ... Psalm
37:3***

My husband will most assuredly agree that my lack of *PATIENCE* was evident throughout most moments of our marriage. Remember, this was the laid back, easy going, contented where placed, *ENDURING* individual that I was attracted to whilst living in a smokescreen of a lackadaisical, mellow yellow, communal tenement existence back in the early 70's. Opposites do attract! And, as I have now learned much later in life, opposing attraction may just be a gift to married couples in God's divine plan. Their vision and bounty is doubled as they experience His provision of "the two shall become one flesh" decree. After all, four eyes are better than two!

I just recalled that I have seen the expression of *IMPATIENCE* in my spouse's demeanor during some traffic congestions, but, by the by, he is content in whatever state he is in. I no longer drive, but my adult children do. Sadly to report, my example and display of *IMPATIENT* road rage in their youth has unfortunately been projected onto them. Witnessing my now adult children's driving habits, I sadly must report that the *IMPATIENT* piloting seeds that I planted in their respective early years have produced an *IMPATIENT* driving crop in their grownup lives. I can only pray that the harvests of the seeds of my *IMPATIENT* aggressive operating behavior are not further reproduced by my children to the third and fourth generation; my grandchildren and great grandchildren. God will cut the evil doers off; He does not need our help.

***FOR EVILDOERS SHALL BE CUT OFF: BUT THOSE THAT WAIT UPON
THE LORD, THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. Psalm 37:9***

With minimal employment demand for an Art and Philosophy major graduate, my husband returned to the education system just prior to our marriage. Applying his artistic talents in the lithography field, he trained at a local trade school. Prior to his graduation, we, okay, I *IMPATIENTLY* mailed out his resume to any number of appropriate employers in anticipation of our western passageway pursuits.

Irrespective of no responses, we *IMPATIENTLY* launched on our Pacific Northwest quest within days of his scholastic graduation achievements. With our overloaded white dodge van, topped off with a shower curtain covered homespun roof carrier, and with U-Haul in tow, we abandoned the security of my job and the familiarity of his hometown life's existence thus far, and advanced on a westward ho.

Aboard, our two *IMPATIENT* cats, Gandalf and Geisha endeavored to amuse themselves in the confinement of this capricious, compact, cage of a carrier. They friskily played in and around the on-board plants, pinball machine and who knows what else. A combination of exhaust and boredom finally ushered them both into a Rip Van Winkle nod. As they slept, the homespun miniature wagon train began the agonizingly gradual ascension up ever steeper mountain roads with their respective deepening ditches. Our pilgrimage rapidly slackened to a snail's pace. My thoughts found me curiously considering the tread of our tires.

Too *IMPATIENT* to slacken our trek even further, we inched passed each tire "chain up area" sign with its respective "chain up area" exit, as snow began accumulating on the sides of the road and windshield wipers. Occasionally the snowfall would turn to sleet, and then to ice and then, vice versa, or versa vice, depending on the altitude. With the varying ice/sleet/snow conditions, nerves were becoming edgier as the roads became narrower. Ditch depths extended ever deeper and steeper.

In spite of our decreased pace, we managed to arrive in Spokane, Washington only after three days of travel. This initial destination turned

out to be our final destination, as my mate snagged his first reproduction job. Gutenberg would be proud! Within a few short months, we *IMPATIENTLY* purchased a home in the city and sixteen acres in the country wherein we planned to build are “back to the land” estate.

A new truck would be a necessary resource to accomplish that developmental task. The van had faithfully satisfied our migration requirements; the fulfillment of its last life’s journey. Soon to follow that mini truck purchase was the bestowal of an additional gift; there was now a baby on board! Who needed *PATIENCE* with this rapid fire chain of events?

We were right on schedule; moving directionally and expeditiously to accomplish all of our/my short term dreams with record breaking momentum. *BOOM!* My husband lost his job and medical coverage. Weren’t we having a baby? *BOOM!* Now, we had all the time in the world without the job to build our country home. However, without adequate funding, what amount of construction materials could we buy? We had no power, no water and no money on site to continue, or even commence our building project. There we were, waiting; *PATIENTLY* waiting and *ENDURING*. Not!

My spouse secured another job which set our *IMPATIENT* timeline back on course. That employment would again provide the monies for building but we were again back to being short on time. This rural abode construction project was taking forever and turned out to be far more monumental than I could have ever imagined. I was really losing my *PATIENCE*. As I watched my mate: hand mix the cement for the foundation, hand saw the two by fours, and hand hammer each nail, I realized how unbearably and painstakingly time-consuming this project was becoming.

To obtain the luxury of electricity, it was going to cost us three thousand dollar to have the power lines brought down the country road wherein our property was located. That was an expense these green gills did not expect. Hauling water was tedious and burdensome. The cost of a drilled well with appropriate piping, lines and taps amounted to another three thousand dollars. We were past spending tens and twenties anymore.

We had renovated our home in town in anticipation of its sale and a nice profit to apply to the building costs of our country estate. That plan was finally realized but not without a few bumps in the road along the way. The profit was eventually recognized from the sale of our city home. However, the *IMPATIENCE* experienced while awaiting the final closing of that house, caused us to move from plan “A”, to plan “B”, to plan “C”, and then on to plan “D”. You see, the city house had four strong offers, over the course of several months, of which three did not achieve perfected contracts. In the midst of the “on again/off again” *FOR SALE* extravaganza, our daughter was born.

My life’s existence to this space and time had never truly contained me to this first reality of feeling “boxed in”. I was not an *ENDURER*. Even my pregnancy term lasted two weeks past the due date. I wanted to escape; get on a bus leaving for anywhere. Yet, I knew that labor would probably commence as soon as the bus left the terminal. The fast paced chain of events subsequent to our initial arrival into the ecstasy of the beautiful wonders of this new found God’s country had suddenly seized up. In our eyes, our life had become nearly immovable as we painfully struggled, *IMPATIENTLY* waiting; *ENDURING* until the cogs in the wheels of our life commenced turning again.

BE PATIENT THEREFORE, BRETHREN, UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD. BEHOLD, THE HUSBANDMAN WAITETH FOR THE PRECIOUS FRUIT OF THE EARTH, AND HATH LONG PATIENCE FOR IT, UNTIL HE RECEIVE THE EARLY AND LATTER RAIN. James 5:7

As our world lethargically ground to an almost halt, it would be my pride and my pregnancy that may have been the only preoccupation keeping me at that moment in this marital relationship. My *PATIENCE* was gone and my unfortunate mate heard *ALL* about it. During this, our daughter’s first Christmas season, I was searching for Christmas carols on the radio. The Christian channel I selected seemed to play the best festive tunes of all the stations. What I did not expect was the fact that I not only found my favorite carols, but I, and soon to follow, my husband, correspondingly found and accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We became the elect of God.

***PUT ON* therefore, *AS THE ELECT OF GOD*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, *LONG-SUFFERING*; Colossians 3:12**

But thou, *O MAN OF GOD*, *FLEE THESE THINGS*; and *FOLLOW AFTER* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, *PATIENCE*, meekness. I Timothy 6:11

We had now been granted an opportunity to become the Bride of Christ and to spend eternity with our Groom, Jesus. With that provision and promise, we purposed through each of our independent wills to follow after Him. It became apparent that a harvest of *PATIENCE* would not only require believing, but obeying too. In the Bible, I found that God promises to be with us and equip us with all that we would need to continue on this earthly journey. Through obedience, the Holy Spirit plants the Fruit of the Spirit into our respective heart's gardens. With the seeds of *LONGSUFFERING* or *PATIENCE* to overcome the challenges to come, it would be my obedience and *FORGIVING* spirit that would open the valve for the nurturing Holy Spirit to provide for the *FLOURISHING* growth in His Fruit of the Spirit garden of *PATIENCE*.

***STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT, ACCORDING TO HIS GLORIOUS POWER, UNTO ALL PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING WITH JOYFULNESS* Colossians 1:11**

As the Holy Spirit *PATIENTLY* tended to each of our hearts' gardens, the resulting growth would not only occur through each of us trusting and obeying His Word, but through *FORGIVENESS*; by each of us humbling ourselves and setting aside our pride. Combining God's Word with obedience and *FORGIVENESS*, this fertilizer could release the power required for the Holy Spirit to perform His perfect work. No matter what our eyes would see, by His strength and might, His power, we could be empowered with *PATIENCE* and with joyfulness.

² *MY BRETHREN, COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN YE FALL INTO DIVERS TEMPTATIONS*; ³ *KNOWING THIS, THAT THE TRYING OF YOUR FAITH WORKETH PATIENCE*. James 1:2-3

However, the Holy Spirit, in our new found relationship, was operating on a much longer and *ENDURING* time frame than I desired and strived to function, in consideration of the events of the prior couple of years. Just like Father God's Bride, Israel, my *IMPATIENCE*, would precede to take over, act up and aim to override the works of God as He *PATIENTLY* purposed to fulfill His perfect work in me.

Even after we sold our city home and moved onto our acreage retreat, I perceived myself a prisoner. Now blessed with two children, I discovered myself often mentally wandering and wondering, as I am sure the Israelites did in their desert, when was our little family going to reach its Promised Land. Where was my contentment? When was the next ensuing adventure going to happen? My passport was available to conquer the next mountain climb. Or better yet, when was Sasquatch going to venture in for a cup of tea? There I was, in the woods of Washington State, waiting, *ENDURING*, waiting, and waiting! Why was I not content?

Behold, WE COUNT THEM HAPPY WHICH ENDURE. YE HAVE HEARD OF THE PATIENCE OF JOB, AND HAVE SEEN THE END OF THE LORD; THAT THE LORD IS VERY PITIFUL, AND OF TENDER MERCY.

James 5:11

Just as I was awaiting the growth and development of my own children, the Holy Spirit was *PATIENTLY* awaiting my growth and development.

WAIT ON THE LORD: BE OF GOOD COURAGE, AND HE SHALL STRENGTHEN THINE HEART: WAIT, I SAY, on the LORD. Psalm 27:14

I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY SOUL DOTH WAIT, AND IN HIS WORD DO I HOPE. Psalm 130:5

As I not so *PATIENTLY*, waited and waited, and waited, I tried to tell God about all the things that I, or rather we, my earthly mate and I as a couple, could accomplish for Him. My *IM-PATIENT* expecting created many thought-provoking discourses with my spouse. These chats, or shall I say, my monologues, allowed me to release the many intriguing imaginings and fascinating feats, I had conceived. I was using these daydreams to escape my current, almost dormant reality that I believed I was currently

ENDURING. I do not think this was the renewing of the mind that the Spirit of God intended for me?

Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but *WAIT ON THE LORD, AND HE SHALL SAVE THEE*. Proverbs 20:22

My courteous husband was ever so compliant. He rather enjoyed where he was presently planted. His future vision was much less complicated and stressful as he *PATIENTLY* enjoyed the current fruit of his labor.

Not that I speak in respect of want: *FOR I HAVE LEARNED, IN WHATSOEVER STATE I AM, THEREWITH TO BE CONTENT*. Philippians 4:11

My restless and *UNFORGIVING* ambitiousness clashed continually with my hubby's contented pacifism. This battle of our wills became a challenge to both of our spiritual walks. In my opinion, God was not working fast enough within either of our Fruit of the Spirit gardens; and it was all my other half's fault.

Now *THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKEMINDED ONE TOWARD ANOTHER* according to Christ Jesus:
[Romans 15:5](#)

In reality, it was my lack of submission to both my earthly and eternal Grooms that impeded me, and caused this much slower course of learning. I was not a very obedient student. Until I submitted to the Holy Spirit's plan for my life, I would never receive His power; His *PATIENCE*. When would I learn to listen to the whispers of His Word and be a "*DOER*" of the Word and not a "*HEARER*" only; adjusting to His way of working things out. Why was I not meditating on His Word day and night?

BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT. Romans 8:25

Again, the world, but more specifically in my mind, my significant other, was responsible for this mess. I could not get out of my self-absorbed cage if my mate did not agree to open the cage door or at least, move the cage. Because of his apparent lack of incentive, initiative and inspiration, I was

losing my *PATIENCE* with him, with my eternal Groom Jesus, with my children, and with myself. I had a plan. Why was God not listening?

***FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE
YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, saith the Lord. Isaiah 55:8***

To re-iterate, my spouse is a very *PATIENT* man. There was such a constancy and contentment about him, and I, not only admired him for that character quality which I lacked, but I resented him for it also. Essentially, I had lost respect for him because he was so unyielding to me. Hmmm, who was required to be doing the submitting here? I believed that he had lost or maybe had never entertained to the same degree, the same vision and ambition that repeatedly and relentlessly erupted within me. As such, I was harboring *UNFORGIVENESS*.

All of this memoir may seem irrelevant here, but it has a purpose. Throughout all the discussions, disconnections, dis-junctions, divisions, or divorces, we must accept the fact that we are not in control. Praise God that He is in fact in control. He is *ALL* knowing; He is *ALL* present, and He is *ALL* powerful. God's timing is perfect timing, and He is all we will ever need. We are called to trust and obey Him. This yesteryear dissertation was included to evidence that no matter our sin and circumstances, God has a plan, and *ALL* things work together for good. Our responsibility is to give *FORGIVENESS* as we have received *FORGIVENESS*, and trust Him.

***And we know that ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO
THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED
ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. Romans 8:28***

Viewing my husband's creative assembly as he fabricated our home imparted to me that construction projections take a long time to complete. More frequently than not, the required objective is not fulfilled as prearranged. With this mindset, we must envision the Holy Spirit tending and pruning His Master work in each of our possibly bitter, broken and *UNFORGIVING* gardens of life. This process is often *ENDURING* and painful, but the fertilizer: the receiving and giving of *FORGIVENESS*, obedience, and the application of His Word, will soon cause our Fruit of the

Spirit gardens to commence *FLOURISHING* under the anointing of the Spirit as the Master's masterpiece.

Only through meditating on God's Word will the Holy Spirit be able to plant the Fruit of the Spirit seed of *PATIENCE* into our heart's gardens. With each new trim and truncate, a greater mangled foundational root amasses; unseen by the naked eye, yet weaving together below the earth's surface, better enabling each of us to remain standing, unshaken and undaunted; dressed in the armor of God, as found in Ephesians 6 of His Word.

Once again it will only be the Word of God and our compliant application of the armor of God that will create His *PATIENCE* within us; an *ENDURING PATIENCE*. The cleansing and renewing of our minds, through the immersing of those same minds and emotions into His Word, will soon empower us through the appropriation of His Spirit, to overcome with *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*. Slowly through the choice of life thoughts and not death thoughts, we will begin to see the workings of the Spirit as *PATIENCE* is lovingly and longingly cultivates into our Fruit of the Spirit hearts' gardens.

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,
THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE
SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE. Romans 15:4**

By meditating on God's Word, amidst the storms affecting relationships, whether disconnection, estrangement, or restoration, we may thereby override our negative, self-centered and *UNFORGIVING IMPATIENT* life thoughts. Then, we may discover ourselves more willing to travel down *PATIENCE* Avenue. We may even observe ourselves voyaging onto spiritual treks we may have never contemplated touring in our many prior manipulating meanders. Again, all things are in our Father's timing.

Even up to a few years ago, I could still be found straying back to *IMPATIENT* Lane. My fuse was extremely short. There I would be, either standing in line at the grocery store or seated, awaiting to order or be served at a local restaurant, and I often could be heard muttering under my breath,

blatantly reminding the world that I was burning daylight; every remaining second of my life had a critical expiration date looming. I must have considered myself pretty important!

By nature, man is averse to *PATIENCE*; admiring only that which is strong and vigorous and powerful. If we are presently feeling abandoned and alone due to estrangement and *UNFORGIVENESS*, we may no longer be feeling strong and vigorous and powerful. By nature, *PATIENCE* is despised; man glories in energy, power, and strength. We may be having trouble getting out of bed these days. Who wants to draw the shades, revealing further darkness into our already bleak, gloomy world, or be exposed to the blinding bright lights of the hopeful, energetic few? We would rather hide away from it all.

These false assumptions about power and strength enveloped my focus, vision and aspiration before meeting my Savior, Jesus. The whispers of the Holy Spirit have since revealed to me that He is very *PATIENT/LONGSUFFERING* with me, and that I am to:

... TAKE PLEASURE IN INFIRMITIES, IN RE-PROACHES, IN NECESSITIES, IN PER-SECUTIONS, IN DISTRESSES FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG. 2 Corinthians 12:10

The ways of the Holy Spirit are definitely not our ways. No matter how much we may try to convince Him otherwise, the Spirit of God is responsible for breaking, melting and molding us. He is on a much slower time frame than we would like Him to be. Hence, we must learn to adjust to His way of working things out, or else, we will find ourselves easily losing our *PATIENCE* and suffering the wrath of disobedience. What good does that do? God and not us, is in control! Thank You, my Love, because I can certainly make a mess of things in my *IMPATIENCE*.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH DOTH SO EASILY BESET US, AND LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US. Hebrews 12:1

Yes, in spite of all the forces that may have already torn so much from our lives, God is still in control. The Spirit of God has set a plan for us from before the beginning of time. He has *PATIENTLY* waited for such a time as this to perfect His perfect work in each of our lives, no matter their respective state of affairs. Empowering us with strength through His mercy, and our obedience and *FORGIVENESS*, these Holy Spirit's fertilizers grants us a *FLOURISHING* harvest of *FORGIVENESS* and *ENDURANCE*; a precious ingathering of *PATIENCE*. God has *FORGIVEN* us; a gift to our broken-hearts. We too must reflect His *PATIENCE* and *FORGIVENESS* as He exemplified to us at the cross.

FOR IN THEE, O LORD, DO I HOPE: THOU WILT HEAR, O LORD MY GOD. Psalm 38:15

But LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK, THAT YE MAY BE PERFECT AND ENTIRE, WANTING NOTHING. James 1:4

In the darkness of the night, when our souls may wrestle in our deepest distresses; when we may ache within and without, spiritually, emotionally, mentally and possibly physically, suffering and speculating when this separation and judgment waylay will ever end, the Holy Spirit soothingly signets unto and into us, the restfully restoring balm of His *FORGIVENESS*. He draws the curtains to reveal the morning light and all His glories to come. As the inundating white-waters of *CONDEMNATION* and lack of *FORGIVENESS* may rise about us, and as we reach for and sometimes cling to the hem of the garment of His *FORGIVENESS*, we must remember that we too are required to *FORGIVE*. As separation and loneliness may engulf us, and there is not an ounce of *PATIENCE* left within, we only need to stretch forth our hand and receive the *PATIENCE* sprouting up through the soil of our personalized Fruit of the Spirit garden.

Through God's mercy and *FORGIVENESS*, we have a new life; a life not of this world; supernaturally implanted within each of us by the Holy Spirit. Choosing to receive His nurturing whispers, His Word, we can, through *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*, remain standing against the onslaughts of Satan's *UNFORGIVENESS* arrows, within our Fruit of the Spirit gardens.

But that *ON THE GOOD GROUND ARE THEY*, which in an honest and good heart, *HAVING HEARD THE WORD, KEEP IT, AND BRING FORTH FRUIT WITH PATIENCE*. Luke 8:15

CHAPTER 6

GENTLENESS/KINDNESS

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, ***GENTLENESS***, goodness, faith, ²³ Meek-ness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

GENTLENESS/KINDNESS IS LOVE IN SOCIETY

How is our expression of *KINDNESS* being released and received in the circumference of our interactions these days? Okay, I understand! We may be fumbling our way through a fog under our present forbearances and may barely be able to see the next step in front of ourselves. Perhaps the deadness of our emotions may no longer allow us to think forward enough even to consider a little *KINDNESS*.

After the pain that many of us may have endured over this last month or two, or extended season, it is conceivable that we may presently be mentally, emotionally, spiritually and possibly now physically so battered, beaten, and bruised by these never ending eruptions of changing events that we may feasibly liken ourselves to a hollowed out corpse. Just what the enemy wants: depression and detachment, with a little discouragement followed by disillusionment thrown in for destruction. Is it reasonable for us to *FORGIVE* in this negative web of reality?

Another cherished gift that my husband possesses for which I have great admiration is his *GENTLENESS* and *KINDNESS*. This was especially noteworthy when expressed while sitting down and actually playing with

our young children. We had made a choice not to have a television set. Hence, he and the children would spend many a stretch of day in make-believe, imagining and/or inventing any number of visions and venues. There were tea parties and beauty parlors, and wrestling bouts and Davy Crockett hunting games; not to overlook the Frisbee tosses, hide and seek search outs and assorted unpredictable art projects.

His demonstration of love to our little brood coupled with his childhood familiarity, knowhow, involvement, and enjoyment of the act of playing, tutored not only the illustration and manifestation of patience and agape love to the children, but also the abundance of *KINDNESS* as he *GENTLY* broached each child's additional request for recreation.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Matthew 7:11

As was occasionally repeated by my mother, I was born an adult. I seem to have seamlessly passed over the folly and frolic of my youth only to emerge into the cares and considerations shouldered by the sensibility of adulthood. As the eldest of eight, my dolls were living and breathing in the form of younger brothers and sisters. They fostered substantially more demands and were provided less *KINDNESS* when in-tow than what may be granted to the store procured plastic molded creations that may be lost or found when desired at the bottom of any toy box.

Don't get me wrong; with our children, I was first-rate for a ball toss or a book read, but Dad was the fun filled and fêted playfellow that also *GENTLY*, patiently and *KINDLY* prayed with and tucked them in each night. After a day of performing my perfect Christian wife, woman and motherly family duties, I had no patience or *KINDNESS* left to tote one more load after the evening dishes.

For our youngsters, the foremost event of our daily routine had to be daddy's arrival home after his work day. As I'm sure is the case in many homes, there was jumping with glee and a bit of bouncing off the walls as the long awaited adult playmate pulled his car into the driveway and further,

into the garage. This father would do anything for our children. As a matter of fact, that introspective, minimally communicative fellow that I married flourished and thrived on the presence and admirations of this adoring fan club, our children.

Who was this strange bloke, full of elation and merriment, as now expressed to our offspring? It was as though someone had finally loosened a seized up spigot from within him. Streaming forth from deep within his very being, erupted an abundance of love, joy, peace, patience and *KINDNESS*. Why had I neither discerned nor recognized with any significance such expression in our lives together thus far wherein “the two shall become one flesh”?

As I write this today, I am seeing a lesson to self as taught then through our children. Was it the abundance of recognitions expressed in our descendants’ appreciations, approvals and awes that produced such a profusion of positive partiality? Had I not kept the law of *KINDNESS* on my tongue as evidenced in the life of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31? Maybe I had spoken more *UNKINDLY* words of death and not *KINDLY* words of life into our marriage. Was I eating the fruit of my tongue?

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and *IN HER TONGUE IS THE LAW OF KINDNESS*. Proverbs 31:26

***DEATH AND LIFE ARE IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUE: AND THEY THAT LOVE IT SHALL EAT THE FRUIT THEREOF.* Proverbs 18:21**

The Greek word “*chrestotes*” is defined in Thayer's Greek Lexicon as: ***moral goodness, integrity, benignity, KINDNESS, GENTLENESS, and uprightness.*** (emphasis supplied)

These days, we are more apt to see, hear, or broach the conveyance of impatience rather than *KINDNESS* or *LOVE IN SOCIETY*. To grasp the prevalence of *UNKINDNESS*, just drive on the freeway at rush hour, or attempt to get home after a sporting event. Better yet, evaluate getting out of the church parking lot after service. Who will progress to the favorite Sunday brunch restaurant first? Have we already forgotten the pastor’s message that day? Was it on *KINDNESS* or *FORGIVENESS*?

***BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY
LOVE; IN HONOUR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER; Romans 12:10***

Many are in a hurry, pressed to get to their next destination. Maybe that is us; running away from our mates, our families; our own existences! Maybe we are the ones who has been left in the whirlwind and dust of abandonment, by children, family, friends or a mate! Many people have lost or never found their ability to *LOVE IN SOCIETY*; treating others with *KINDNESS* and respect. It is possible that we may have even noticed this to some degree in our own churches?

***But LOVE YE YOUR ENEMIES, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing
again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the
Highest: for HE IS KIND UNTO THE UNTHANKFUL AND TO THE EVIL.***

Luke 6:35

Have we tried to express a little *LOVE IN SOCIETY* or *KINDNESS* lately? Humanity today is often taken aback when one offers a warm-hearted word or transfers an act of *KINDNESS*. A caring action or a *KINDLY* word to another person may sincerely achieve wonders for them; especially amidst the confusion and pain of abandonment and loneliness, or dejection and rejection.

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Proverbs 15:1

I recently smiled at a couple in another checkout line at a department store in Canada. After we each had completed our respective transactions, they tracked me to the exit door. Curiously inquiring, their first explicit and precise speculation was that we must have been acquainted with one another during a prior period of time, and they had forgotten me.

My response was simple. Through the jester of a smile, I chose to be an illustration of Christ's love to those around me. Continuing, I asked them if they knew Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Returning affirmatively, they expressed delight and desire in future communications, especially after I

provided them with one of the assurance tracts that I had compiled which included my Florida address.

So far that communiqué has not transpired, but the expression and receipt of a smile, an act of *KINDNESS, LOVE IN SOCIETY* was ministered followed by an opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ.

... BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH YOU A REASON OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR: 1 Peter 3:15

When are we going to get out of our own way and start seeing ourselves as vessels of the Holy Spirit, assigned to fulfill *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*? In Act 16, Paul was beaten and thrown in jail for proclaiming the Gospel. What did he do after being wrongfully reprehended and reprimanded, and physically pounded and punched?

²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely ... ²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas *PRAYED, AND SANG PRAISES UNTO GOD*: and the prisoners heard them. Acts 16: 23, 25

They started to sing and praise God! Maybe we do not feel like singing and praising God. Do we hurt worse than Paul? I am sure that they did not feel like it either. However, in spite of the bleakness that surrounded them, and out of love for their God Who promised never to leave them and Who is always in control, they chose to sing and praise and worship Him. What happened as a result of them singing praises and praying when they did not feel like it?

²⁶ And **SUDDENLY** there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: ... **ALL THE DOORS WERE OPENED, AND EVERY ONE'S BANDS WERE LOOSED.** ²⁷ And **THE KEEPER OF THE PRISON ...** ²⁹ ... **FELL DOWN** before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ And brought them out, **AND SAID, SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?** ³¹ And they said, **BELIEVE** on the Lord Jesus Christ, **AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED, AND THY HOUSE.** Acts 16: 26-27, 29-31

The most important thing of our earthly existence and purpose happened; not only the jailer but his whole family were saved. As we allow the Holy Spirit to flow through us, as demonstrated here through Paul and Silas, the testimony of our actions in the midst of the storm will attract others to us. The expression of *LOVE IN SOCIETY* will arouse others on to aspire to what we have; to receive eternal life; Salvation through the sacrificial blood of Jesus. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

We must rest assured; trustingly knowing that God is in control. He is in charge! There is no greater power and protector than that which is provided for us by our tender, *GENTLE*, and full of *LOVING KINDNESS* eternal *LOVE*.

³³ **And HE TOOK THEM THE SAME HOUR OF THE NIGHT, AND WASHED THEIR STRIPES; AND WAS BAPTIZED, HE AND ALL HIS, STRAIGHTWAY.** ³⁴ **And when HE HAD BROUGHT THEM INTO HIS HOUSE, HE SET MEAT BEFORE THEM, AND REJOICED, BELIEVING IN GOD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE.** ³⁵ **And WHEN IT WAS DAY, THE MAGISTRATES SENT THE SERJEANTS, SAYING, LET THOSE MEN GO.**
Acts 16:33-35

Look at the change of actions afforded to Paul and Silas, because they chose to submit and trust God; to praise and pray and worship God? The consequences of our lives will also be transformed for us by the Holy Spirit as we pray, praise and wait in great expectation for Almighty God's *ALL* powerful control, presence and knowing. Maybe it will not happen today, but it will happen in His timing.

Don't sit alone feeling trampled and trodden and maybe even a little imprisoned by self. Praise and pray and worship God, ***OUT LOUD!*** We do this, not based on our feelings, but by our choices of submission and trust. Our obedience to Father God will change the events of our lives. Maybe the change will not come from without. It could be that the change may have to come from within!

This may not materialize in our timing and it may not modify the current circumstances surrounding us, but the Holy Spirit is there, within each of

us. Just as the jailer cared for Silas and Paul following this act of God, so the Holy Spirit is caring for us; washing our wounds, feeding our spirits and healing us with His eternal anointing found only in the healing balm of His *LOVING KINDNESS*, as expressed through His Word.

As is too often the case these days, a matter of rule and not a matter of occasion, we find ourselves surrounded by people who are angry, pre-absorbed, and/or self-centered. With cell phones, laptops, tablets, and other up to date information providing devices, individuals are immersed in their respective isolated worlds. *KINDNESS* and *FORGIVENESS* are rare commodities. We don't have to ask or give *FORGIVENESS* and you do not have to show any *KINDNESS* to these plastic modes of communications. They are disposable! We can always purchase a new one. Are we more introverted, emotionally protected by our hand held technology or, do we purpose to be extracted into the perception prompting reality of our respective settings?

If we have received *FORGIVENESS* for all of our sins through the abundant love and sacrifice as displayed in Christ's love for us on the cross, then it should not be very difficult for us, through the whispers and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to abound in that same *LOVING KINDNESS* as taught to us through Jesus' life here on the earth.

***INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF
THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME. Matthew 25:40***

KINDNESS is the fifth seed of the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit pursues us, yearning to plant the seed of *KINDNESS* into each of our personal Fruit of the Spirit hearts' gardens. Do we still not think, or know from God Word that in spite of the circumstances that currently may engulf us, the Holy Spirit longingly and lovingly desires for us to receive His *LOVING KINDNESS*? The fruit of *KINDNESS* touches human relationships. It is an active and outgoing expression of love toward us from God's own Spirit.

In receipt of His love and *KINDNESS*, we, in turn, must diligently seek to give back our understanding of that same *KINDNESS* through us to others;

again accomplishing *Thy will to be done in earth as it is in heaven*. Our love and obedience to the Spirit of God coupled with our *FORGIVENESS*, will cause the expressing of that love and obedience in the form of *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* to overflow in *LOVING KINDNESS* within our Fruit of the Spirit gardens toward our fellow man. *LOVE IN SOCIETY*! The demonstration of *KINDNESS* in this day is a perfect door opener or bait on the hook, if I may, for becoming fishers of men.

How many abandoned, depressed, deserted, divorce, separated, and/or lonesome people that may be found in our recovery groups and/or present-day circles, are smiling? Are we surrounded by those complaining and spewing forth despair, resentment, threats and lack of *FORGIVENESS* or, are we surrounding ourselves with those conveying God's *LOVING KINDNESS*? Have we been renewing our mind and thinking Godly thoughts? Are the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart acceptable in the Spirit of God's sight? With whom are we fellowshiping? Are we surrounded with a united body of believers who are also overflowing with the flourishing fruit of *KINDNESS* in their respective Fruit of the Spirit gardens?

LET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH, AND THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART, BE ACCEPTABLE IN THY SIGHT, O LORD, MY STRENGTH, AND MY REDEEMER. Psalm 19:14

Not only may we be able to touch others with this Holy Spirit fertilized fruit of *KINDNESS*, but we may also be able to affect our own lives. When we feel better within and without ourselves through the healing balm of *KINDNESS* received and applied by the Spirit through the *GENTLE* whispering of God's Word, we soon may learn how to treat others with much more *KINDNESS* and respect in our daily dealings and affairs with them. *LOVE IN SOCIETY*.

But I say unto you, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, BLESS THEM THAT CURSE YOU, DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THEM WHICH DESPITEFULLY USE YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU; Matthew 5:44

I am aware that some of us may be walking through some very dark corridors where we may be fumbling for a little *KINDNESS* from anywhere. Remember, the Holy Spirit is with us. God promised never to leave us. He has chosen us! The Holy Spirit resides within us.

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 ... John 15:16

... the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY*: Colossians 1:27

And so, with the Spirit residing inside of us, and choosing a harvest of *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*, our well nurtured Fruit of the Spirit garden of *KINDNESS* will abound through us by our obedience. By the same obedience, *FORGIVENESS* and *KINDNESS*, all those in our contiguous circles may see God in us. Whether by a smile instead of a frown, a *KIND* word of encouragement or comfort instead of silence or grumbling, the *KINDNESS* fruit once ripened can only produce seeds that will bear *KINDNESS* fruit. The *KINDNESS* that the Holy Spirit longs to have flowing through us to the world Jesus died for and loves. *LOVE IN SOCIETY. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

The fruit of *KINDNESS* does not usually cost money. That is a good think as many of us are probably short of cash at this point in time. The sacrifice of *KINDNESS* may cost us some time and/or energy; but after all our Jesus did for us at the cross, time and energy are such a small price to pay. The fruit of *KINDNESS* will require that we get our heads out of the surrounding haze and renew our minds through the choice of discipline and the Word of God.

Only through the receipt of the Spirit of God's revelation of *KINDNESS* to us, may we be able to see the necessity to express His *KINDNESS* to those around us; to others who may be in need. And, in doing so, we are fulfilling His purpose for our lives by allowing, *Thy will to be done on earth as it is in heaven*; in and through us. It will be the Holy Spirit, the Master Gardener Who will cultivate and fertilize and nurture the *KINDNESS* fruit within our Fruit of the Spirit hearts' gardens; an abundant manifestation of God's

KIND nature. Through His *LOVING KINDNESS*, God had compassion for His Bride, Israel. He considered that she was but flesh, and He remembered her sins no more.

³⁷ *FOR their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant.* ³⁸ *BUT HE, BEING FULL OF COMPASSION, FORGAVE THEIR INIQUITY, AND DESTROYED THEM NOT: YEA, MANY A TIME TURNED HE HIS ANGER AWAY, AND DID NOT STIR UP ALL HIS WRATH.* ³⁹ *FOR HE REMEMBERED THAT THEY WERE BUT FLESH; A WIND THAT PASSETH AWAY, AND COMETH NOT AGAIN.* Psalm 78:37-39

Yea, I HAVE LOVED THEE WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE: THEREFORE WITH LOVINGKINDNESS HAVE I DRAWN THEE.
Jeremiah 31:3

When dealing with difficult people, mother would often advise me to “*kill them with KINDNESS*”. Jesus was killed as an expression of His *LOVING KINDNESS*. He did this knowing our sins: our stubbornness, neglect and rebellions; our many disappoints to Him. And yet, where is the Spirit of God; within us ever ready to serve us with yet more *FORGIVENESS* and *LOVING KINDNESS*.

FOR THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DEPART, AND THE HILLS BE REMOVED; BUT MY KINDNESS SHALL NOT DEPART FROM THEE, NEITHER SHALL THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED, SAITH THE LORD THAT HATH MERCY ON THEE. Isaiah 54:10

CHAPTER 7

GOODNESS

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, ***GOODNESS***, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

GOODNESS IS LOVE IN ACTION

We may ask where is this *GOODNESS* or *LOVE IN ACTION* that should be displayed to us in our lives today. Currently, we may be forced to leave our home because the funds for child support have not been delivered or our paychecks may not cover our present living expenses. Who will stand up and show us some *GOODNESS*? Did the few residual threadbare strands of our present bond of “the two shall become one flesh” sever today when our mate returned home, announcing that they had just lost their job? Where is the provision of *GOODNESS* in that? There must be a lottery ticket or better yet, a wealthy benefactor that we may rub shoulders with who will make everything better; offering *GOODNESS* or *LOVE IN ACTION*?

Has there ever been a certain someone in our existence, who we thought, if only we could rub shoulders with them, life would be so much better? I am sure there is or was someone in our life’s journey whose head stood out from above the rest. We probably had a difficult time getting close to them because they were like a magnet; everyone wanted to attach themselves to them; to be in close proxemics to them and share their same air space. Was it the quality of *GOODNESS* that drew us to them?

And if we were finally able to be graced by their individuality and stand in the intensity of their radiance, we doubtless mentally determined that we

fancied whatever they had that made them so fascinating to us. We may have even aspired to cultivate a bountiful overflowing harvest of whatever “it” was. From that point of first contact, we purposed to be a reflection of that “hard to put our finger on” quality. Was “it”, *GOODNESS* that we so desired to emulate?

There were a few such individuals in my elementary training but it was the explosion of preferences that erupted in my panoramas whilst attending the affluent Catholic girls’ high school that enlarged the perception of potential possibilities in my life’s periscope. As I espoused in CHAPTER 2 on *LOVE*, I had an amplified set of insecurities which I supposed originated from what I alleged to be, the magnitude of my prior lack. With the appropriate tools and the many mountains to ascend ahead, it would now be feasible for me to transcend my past lack and apprehend what I assumed to be all that I believed to be aspirations of *GOODNESS*.

Again, the revelations provided through that freshly enlightening educational exposure unexpectedly illuminated many alternatives not envisioned in my prior teen year dreams. The awe-inspiring opportunities to rub shoulder with those in whom I may accumulate such tools in my climb to surmount the chain of crests in my vision were now endless. Boundlessly forthcoming possibilities were becoming readily available to attain what I held to be the *GOODNESS* of worldly knowledge, achievement and fortune.

In retrospect, I would consider my husband one such character or resource. Back during our term at the tenement abode, his efficiency’s chairs seating and floor spaces were often filled to capacity with those seeking out his then, “big screen color TV of the 70’s”, for their own viewing pleasure. Others would gather at his pinball machine personally challenging and out-maneuvering for highest recorded score achievement. Or, well I will let you assume the other sources of enticements that may have attracted such a motley crew to one such as himself during that period. Did they want him personally for his *GOODNESS*, or were they exploiting him for what he had; like his Pachinko machine for one?

These forms of entertainment or “things” generated an image of popularity by the many who wanted to amuse themselves; ingratiating themselves with his *GOODNESS*. Didn’t these neighboring apartment dwellers truthfully chose to rub shoulders with him because he had something that they wanted? Based on my inflated high regard and respect for this same character, my soon to be spouse, and his birthright, I guess I too purposed to rub shoulders with him because of what He had that I wanted. This was definitely apparent in retrospect and in evaluation and personal comparison of our lives; gauging what he could tender in relation to all that I wasn’t offering.

Before my return to Canada, our initial interactions often found me securing my basic provision of sustenance in exchange for cleaning his apartment, doing the laundry and cooking his food. After our marriage, I found myself striving to live through my husband’s prior education, experiences and quality of life upbringing. In other words, what he had already received and/or what he had already realized; his *GOODNESS*. Remember, much of his background and present attainments were all aspirations that I had not yet achieved personally. Was I just so insecure with myself and swept away in the hidden bad boy charm of his Rhett Butler magnetism? How likely was it for me to believe that he truly wanted to marry someone such as myself? What was I bringing to the great *GOODNESS* of this now mutual table?

As time progressed and we sought *FORGIVENESS*, accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, other individuals, representing *GOODNESS* would pass into my analytical view. Divinely destined to cross my pre-ordained path, such nurturing guides included, Bible study leaders, pastors, authors, and mature spiritual woman of the church; each exhibiting to me some of the multifaceted expressions of God’s *GOODNESS* through their respective lives? However, my worldly dreams of “*becoming*” continued to contaminate my course! One must pause and evaluate the driving force behind each of my aspirations and shoulder rubbing scenarios. What was the purpose for my “*becoming*”? What was the actual attraction to these individuals? Was I really drawn to God’s *GOODNESS*, or did I want to mask my lack by mimicking them?

People were almost always flocking to rub shoulders with Jesus. He exploded with *GOODNESS* wherever he was; often having to preach from a boat to escape the compression of the persistently pressing multitudes about Him. Sometimes Jesus would elude the same throngs. Secluded on some mountain refuge, Jesus required the refilling of the *GOODNESS* of the Holy Spirit; alone with, and so to be refreshed and restored by Father God.

GOODNESS is often confused with *KINDNESS* which was expressed by Jesus in His compassion, and *FORGIVENESS* towards the sinning woman who anointed his feet.

³⁷ ... A WOMAN ... WHICH WAS A SINNER ... BROUGHT AN ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT, ³⁸ AND STOOD AT HIS FEET BEHIND HIM WEEPING, AND BEGAN TO WASH HIS FEET WITH TEARS, AND DID WIPE THEM WITH THE HAIRS OF HER HEAD, AND KISSED HIS FEET, AND ANOINTED THEM WITH THE OINTMENT. ³⁹ NOW ... THE PHARISEE ... SPAKE ... IF HE WERE A PROPHET, WOULD HAVE KNOWN WHO AND WHAT MANNER OF WOMAN THIS IS THAT TOUCHETH HIM: FOR SHE IS A SINNER. ⁴⁰ ... JESUS ANSWERING ... ⁴⁴ ... SEEST THOU THIS WOMAN? I ENTERED INTO THINE HOUSE, THOU GAVEST ME NO WATER FOR MY FEET: BUT SHE HATH WASHED MY FEET WITH TEARS, AND WIPED THEM WITH THE HAIRS OF HER HEAD. ⁴⁵ THOU GAVEST ME NO KISS: BUT THIS WOMAN SINCE THE TIME I CAME IN HATH NOT CEASED TO KISS MY FEET. ⁴⁶ MY HEAD WITH OIL THOU DIDST NOT ANOINT: BUT THIS WOMAN HATH ANOINTED MY FEET WITH OINTMENT. ⁴⁷ WHEREFORE I SAY UNTO THEE, HER SINS, WHICH ARE MANY, ARE FORGIVEN; FOR SHE LOVED MUCH ⁴⁸ AND HE SAID UNTO HER, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN ... ⁵⁰ AND HE SAID TO THE WOMAN, THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE ... Luke 7:37-40, 44-48, 50

The word “GOOD” is used in many different contexts. Someone may be “GOOD” at math, meaning competence; “GOOD” brakes, indicating reliable. Someone may have “GOOD” eyesight, or strong eyes. Someone else may refer to a “GOOD” child, denoting their behavior. *KINDNESS* is often considered the nicer and gentler aspects of *GOODNESS* whereas

GOODNESS as we will apply here is rather a forthright and passionate quality by which doing GOOD to others is not necessarily pleasant and warm.

GOODNESS is the sixth Fruit of the Spirit. The Biblical definition of GOODNESS as conveyed in this passage is mentioned as ***a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action that includes virtue, and moral GOODNESS***. GOODNESS may be thought of as both an uprightness of soul and as an action reaching out to others to do “GOOD” even when it is not deserved. GOODNESS or “*agathosune*” is used four times in the New Testament. The first use is provided here in [Galatians 5:22](#) describing the Fruit of the Spirit. The other three are as follows:

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, THAT YE ALSO ARE FULL OF GOODNESS, FILLED WITH ALL KNOWLEDGE, ABLE ALSO TO ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER. Romans 15:14

(For THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS IN ALL GOODNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH;) Ephesians 5:9

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that OUR GOD WOULD COUNT YOU WORTHY OF THIS CALLING, AND FULFIL ALL THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS GOODNESS, AND THE WORK OF FAITH WITH POWER: 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Full of GOODNESS and knowledge; fruit of GOODNESS and righteousness and truth; fulfill the GOOD pleasures of God’s GOODNESS and the work of faith with power. In analysis, I consider Jesus expressing GOODNESS when He cleansed the moneymakers from the temple.

¹² ***And JESUS WENT INTO THE TEMPLE OF GOD, AND CAST OUT ALL THEM THAT SOLD AND BOUGHT IN THE TEMPLE, AND OVERTHREW THE TABLES OF THE MONEYCHANGERS, AND THE SEATS OF THEM THAT SOLD DOVES,*** ¹³ ***AND SAID UNTO THEM, IT IS WRITTEN, MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER; but ye have made it a den of thieves. Matthew 21:12-15***

Jesus displayed a righteous *GOODNESS* here; a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue, and moral *GOODNESS*, as was demonstrate in the Scripture above. We too, are to be “*FILLED WITH*”. However, we first must be “*FILLED*”. Who will do the “*FILLING*” of *GOODNESS* in us; ourselves or, the Holy Spirit? Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. Are we? And being “*FILLED WITH*”, we become so full that we eventually overflow. What happens when we overflow with the Spirit’s *GOODNESS*? We bear or produce, and may *FLOURISH* in the fruit of *GOODNESS*.

Don’t get frustrated and close the book now. I know that we live in a world that has chosen to be “*FILLED WITH*” itself; selfish self, and not the mercy, *FORGIVENESS* and *GOODNESS* of God’s Spirit. If we cannot find a smile of kindness, we surely will have trouble readily finding an act of *GOODNESS*; or will we?

Or *DESPISEST THOU THE RICHES OF HIS GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING; NOT KNOWING THAT THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?* Romans 2:4

Shall we allow the Holy Spirit to whisper the refreshing and restoring *GOODNESS* of His Word into our thrashed and trounced existences; “*FILLING*” us with our desperate need for His *GOODNESS*? Are we so “*FILLED WITH*” His breathed Word, hence becoming so engorged with His *GOODNESS*, that we are bearing or producing, and *FLOURISHING*, abounding and overflowing with the fruit of *GOODNESS* to all those about us? Jesus overflowed with righteous *GOODNESS* at the temple when the moneychangers were not presenting holy behavior for the feast. What are we overflowing with at the present time?

Bearing this fruit of *GOODNESS* is manifested as a result of *FORGIVENESS* and our obedience. This obedience requires that we renew our minds with the Living Word in order that we may continue to obey. It is then and only then that the empowering Word of God will naturally be able to flow forth from within to without. Why, because we have been counted worthy of His calling.

***BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOM THOU CHOOSEST, AND CAUSEST TO
APPROACH UNTO THEE, THAT HE MAY DWELL IN THY COURTS:
WE SHALL BE SATISFIED WITH THE GOODNESS OF THY HOUSE,
EVEN OF THY HOLY TEMPLE. Psalm 65:4***

Since we are found worthy, through the blood of Jesus, we become the Holy Spirit's instruments to "*FULFILL*" his *GOOD* pleasure or purpose. This *GOODNESS* may be expressed to us through the Word of the Spirit either for our knowledge or for our admonition. Our purpose is to present this *GOODNESS* to a lost and dying world. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

***HE LOVETH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT: THE EARTH IS
FULL OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD. Psalm 33:5***

If we are obedient and listen, the Spirit is able to communicate this to us to "*FULFILL*" our respective ordained purposes. Jesus admonished the moneychangers on the holiness of God's house. Are we ready to, "*TAKE A STAND*", or are we going to be, "*STOOD ON*"? In addition, we must equally be ready to do *GOOD* to those who desire to harm us. *LOVE IN ACTION.*

For me, an even greater challenge is my approach in the readiness to admonish or correct another spiritually. That was not a problem for me in the flesh as related to my spouse. I was ready and able to continually correct that poor man. At present, we may be encircled by all kinds of people who are readily available; armed with admiration, admonishment, advisement, amazement and/or astonishment at the current arrangement of our affairs. However, *GOD IS IN CONTROL.* He is our Adviser. He is madly in love with us, and He waits in admiration and amazement and yes, sometimes in admonishment of us.

***WHY BOASTEST THOU THYSELF IN MISCHIEF, O MIGHTY MAN?
THE GOODNESS OF GOD ENDURETH CONTINUALLY. Psalm 52:1***

In spite of the chaos and calamity of the confusion confronting us, Jesus is the King of Kings! Consider ourselves David, going into battle with a slingshot against the giant, Goliath. Who was the winner there? Who is the

precious winner here? How can we not fall down as the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus and worship at the footstool of our King of Kings? We are righteous today through His blood shed on the cross at Calvary. Everything that is righteous is granted access to the throne room of God.

***OH HOW GREAT IS THY GOODNESS, WHICH THOU HAST LAID UP
FOR THEM THAT FEAR THEE; WHICH THOU HAST WROUGHT FOR
THEM THAT TRUST IN THEE BEFORE THE SONS OF MEN! Psalm
31:19***

Are we a magnet? Do people flock to us because of our reflection of the fruit of *GOODNESS*? Who is inquiring of us or others, as to what makes us “tic”? Many of us may be encompassed by such despondency in our current states of shoulder rubbing. Is anyone asking us the reason for our smile, our bright Light in the darkness; our *HOPE*? Is not our purpose on this path of life to reflect God’s *GOODNESS*; engaging others to receive God’s merciful everlasting life; Salvation.

***And he said, I WILL MAKE ALL MY GOODNESS PASS BEFORE THEE,
AND I WILL proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will BE
GRACIOUS TO WHOM I WILL BE GRACIOUS, AND WILL SHEW
MERCY ON WHOM I WILL SHEW MERCY. Exodus 33:19***

In the midst of what some would consider *UNFORGIVEABLE* horrific pain and circumstances associated with relational disaffection, discord, and/or distancing, will we choose to shine the beacon of *HOPE*? Will we, through the appropriation of the Holy Spirit’s strength, let others observe God’s Light glimmering through us? Through the fruit of *GOODNESS*, as granted to us by the Spirit, are we drawing the world of sinners ever closer into our proxemics, and to repentance and Salvation?

***LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE
YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN
HEAVEN. MATTHEW 5:16***

Trudging down these zigzagging partitioning paths of estrangement and lack of *FORGIVENESS*, bystanders may observe an inner strength in our

step; watching in amazement the display of this divinely empowered might as may only flourish in the Spirit of God's Fruit of the Spirit garden of *GOODNESS*.

***I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH
STRENGTHENETH ME. Philippians 4:13***

There are some believers who may tell us that they are saved today because they were attracted to someone who had a sure something radiating from their life that they wanted. Did they want the *LOVE* and *GOODNESS* of the Fruit of the Spirit? Was it someone just like us that was shining the Light that caused them to come to believe? Do people stand in awe of our something special? Are we a likeness of the Holy Spirit's fruit of *GOODNESS*? In particular, are children drawn to us? Children are often captivated by people overflowing in *GOODNESS*. There is an air of trust and safety about them, with no hidden room of manipulation set up in their hearts. One's inner spirit just senses that they would never deliberately hurt us.

Let us be girded with the Holy Spirit's strength and reflect His Light through our godly behavior. Shall we extend a hand of *GOODNESS* and draw the broken and bruised around us with the *FLOURISHING LOVE* and *GOODNESS* of our Fruit of the Spirit gardens? How can we choose not to emit this extraordinary fragrance of mercy and *FORGIVENESS* to the world; to those who are watching us with peculiar scrutiny? Are we ever ready with an answer for the reason of the *HOPE* that is within us?

***But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and BE READY ALWAYS TO
GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH YOU A REASON
OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU with meekness and fear: 1 Peter 3:15***

Maybe today we do not feel like there is any *GOODNESS* within us left to share with those around us. That is fine, because our actions are not dependent on our feelings. Also, it is better to be depleted of all that we are, in order that we may be "*FILLED*" with all that He is. The Holy Spirit will "*FILL*" us if we allow Him; to fertilize us through our obedience and *FORGIVENESS*; affecting every thought, word and action from this time forward.

Possibly, we have experienced some of the negative motives of those lacking *FORGIVENESS*; of those taking advantage of the abandoned and forlorn. Let us be prepared to keep our motives right as we are called into actions of righteous *GOODNESS*; true *GOODNESS* that is inseparable from godliness. One amazing benefit of the quality of *GOODNESS* is that it does not waiver like some of the other Fruit of the Spirit. Do we always have *PEACE*? Are we always *PATIENT*? At times, have we lost *FAITH*? The fruit of *GOODNESS* reminds me of the foundation of a house; the strength of the house is dependent on the strength of its foundation. Are we worried about being a hypocrite? Maybe we are afraid because in their close scrutiny of our behavior, other people may see our failings. Well the fact of the matter is what it is; we are *GOOD*; we are not “*PERFECT*”.

¹⁰ As it is written, *THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE ...* ¹² ...
THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO, NOT ONE ... ²³ *FOR ALL*
HAVE SINNED, AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD; Romans
3:10, 12, 23

Jesus was the only Perfect One. He loves and *FORGIVES* us. Amidst the mind-boggling madness and mayhem of some of our current sets of circumstances, many often the result of [sin](#), God looks upon us through the blood of His Son Jesus, and sees us now as white as snow. We have *All* sinned. However, with, in and through His endless *GOODNESS*, the Holy Spirit leads us to His arms of [repentance](#) and love. Sometimes that trail is piercing and painful; but so was the way to the cross. The Spirit of God's intentions for us are always *GOOD*. We may question the Holy Spirit's purpose when we encounter those that we may be struggling to *FORGIVE*, procreating and prosperous, and yet:

... for *HE MAKETH HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND ON THE*
GOOD, AND SENDETH RAIN ON THE JUST AND ON THE UNJUST.
Matthew 5:45

Although there is evil about us, the Holy Spirit chooses to cultivate the seeds of *GOODNESS* in our respective lives. I am thankful that as I walk through this life, ever faltering through my sins of omission, sins of commission and recurring sins, that I am followed by *GOODNESS* and

mercy. This immeasurable gift provided by the blood of Jesus to us, at the cross; eternally washed from *ALL* our sins, *ALL* the days of our lives.

***SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE
DAYS OF MY LIFE: AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE
LORD FOR EVER. Psalm 23:6***

CHAPTER 8

FAITH

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, ***FAITH***, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

FAITH IS LOVE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

How are we contending today? Based on the appalling adversity that may be surrounding some of our “*here and now*” existences, are we still able to totter through the tenacious trash tossed toward our battle fields of *FAITH*? Amidst these debris ridden grounds, can we even find our mark on the battle line? As we await our restoration, maybe we are desperately trying to at least cling to the fringe of Jesus’ garment; collapsing and surrendering, in total *FAITH* at His feet. Is it possible that we no longer have any *FAITH* or *FORGIVENESS* left? Where is God in all of this?

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.
Romans 7:18

Whether it is personal relationships with family members, friends, work colleagues or interactions on church and/or community projects, the fruit or quality of *FAITH* will be an indispensable ingredient in our relational encounters. No matter what course of terrain we may be presently travelling in any of these particular associations, *FAITH* will be the only supporting and sustaining forecast of strength as dispensed by the Holy Spirit in our singular connection with God.

⁶ For *WHEN WE WERE YET WITHOUT STRENGTH*, in due time
CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY ... ⁸ But *GOD COMMENDETH HIS*
LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS,
CHRIST DIED FOR US Romans 5:6, 8

Today, more than half of all marriages decline into divorce. Is it any wonder that God in His infinite wisdom through His Holy Spirit supplies us with the Fruit of the Spirit; specifically the seventh fruit, *FAITH*? Without *FORGIVENESS* and *FAITH*, what have we left to sustain us? I pray that as we expand on *FAITH* here, we will each become increasingly more aware of the immeasurable harvest that the Holy Spirit desires to have produced, and subsequently *FLOURISH* in each of our respective Fruit of the Spirit gardens. *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* and obedience will be the necessary nutrients that will cause this fruit of *FAITH* to be tended, cultivated and harvested within by the Holy Spirit; our personal commitments to *FORGIVENESS*, obedience, and renewal through the Word of God.

And be found in him, *NOT HAVING MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS,*
WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT that which is THROUGH THE FAITH OF
CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH:
Philippians 3:9

As offered to us, *FAITH*, like *FORGIVENESS* through the sacrifice of Jesus, and as with all the other Fruit of the Spirit, is in fact given to us by the Spirit essentially as a gift. Through our receipts of these gifts of *FORGIVENESS* through, and *FAITH* in Jesus, and through our obedience and the appropriation of the Holy Spirit's power and might, we may better be able to brave the perfecting encounters pre-prescribed on the paths of our personal life's passages.

¹⁶ That *HE WOULD GRANT YOU, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF*
HIS GLORY, TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN
THE INNER MAN; ¹⁷ That *CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY*
FAITH; that ye, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, Ephesians
3:16-17

Although I had received *FORGIVENESS* at the foot of the cross, my initially fledgling spiritual walk was driven more by my own lack of self-esteem than by *FAITH*. In considering the many diverse problems discovered in our marriage, I tended to attribute the obstructions to be more manifestations from my lack of skill set and refinement than from any possible lack in the outstanding offerings imparted by my husband.

Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. Psalm 86:11

The perfectionist that I was at the time that I accepted Christ as my Savior, somehow propelled me ever further to be: the perfect Christian wife, the perfect Christian mother, and the perfect Christian church lady. There I was, ever seeking and searching God's Word, the writings of Christian authors, and those more spiritually mature; ever hungering for the interpretations, if possible, quick fix solutions, so that I may become ever more advanced and enriched from all that I believed at that time, I was not. Was that *FAITH*?

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. Psalm 119:30

Grays turned to black and white, and wider paths became narrower. The legalistic approach and restrictions of my initial growth afforded me only right and wrong restraints; and not the *FORGIVENESS* and freedom founded at the cross. Combining this self-imposed single-mindedness or rather, lack of benevolence, with the additional self-inflicted rigidity of rules and regulations, only further stretched the already fraying bonds of our marriage. The result anticipated was not the resolve of the strength, power and might of *FAITH* as whispered and readily provided to us by the Spirit of God.

My spiritually immature self, experienced the exact opposite. I was bitter, *UNFORGIVING* and lacking *FAITH*. My world of control careened me ever further into confusion. However, slowly but surely I was to comprehend:

For MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, saith the Lord. Isaiah 55:8

We may not otherwise be affected to *FLOURISH* had we not experienced and endured the many matching tumultuous tempests that may have been set to surround us. I was soon to find out that Father God desired to break, melt and mold me; fashioning me to His perfect will and purpose in the first place. As “*Humpty Dumpty*” had a great fall, and “*all the king’s horses and all the king’s men*” put him back together again; for me, after my great fall, it would be the Holy Spirit Who would put me back together again. However, as a babe in Christ, I did not yet understand the Holy Spirit, and the *FORGIVENESS* and enduring *FAITH* that would be require.

³ ... but *WE GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS ALSO: KNOWING THAT TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE; ⁴ AND PATIENCE, EXPERIENCE; AND EXPERIENCE, HOPE: ⁵ AND HOPE MAKETH NOT ASHAMED; BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO US.*
Romans 5:3-5

Once my spouse and I had accepted Jesus as our Savior, entering into a sincere relationship with Him, our goals then became to hold fast and stay *FAITHFUL*, as we had already vowed to do to each other, but now, unwavering before and to God. It would only be that intimate rapport with the Holy Spirit through the Word of God that would strengthen and bind us in our earthly connection to each other as “the two shall become one flesh”.

The Greek word “*Pistis*” according to the New Testament Greek Lexicon is defined as ***FAITHFULNESS, to be trustworthy, to be loyal, and to be reliable***. What is our personal demonstration of *FAITHFULNESS* to the world around us? Who can count on us; can God, or our mates, or our children? How about our extended family and/or friends? Are we good stewards with what God has entrusted to us?

... IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL. 1 Corinthians 4:2

How many loyal, reliable and trustworthy friends do we have? Some say we may only be blessed with two or three *FAITHFUL* friends in a lifetime. Maybe we are at the point in this slog wherein family and friends have

chosen their respective opposing sides; full of judgment and lack of *FORGIVENESS*. The lines of personal back-stabbing loyalties may have been drawn in the sand. What happened to the ideal that a true friend, or better yet, a spouse, or family, for that matter, will stay by our side for life; through thick and thin; for better or for worse?

These days, we can be confident that God will stay *FAITHFUL* to us in our own personal relationship with Him. His example of *LOVE* will not only teach us, but strengthen us through *FAITH* to be and remain loyal; to be and remain *FAITHFUL* in our own personal relationship with not only Him but with those He has placed in our lives' sojourns.

¹ ... being justified *BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: ² BY WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND, AND REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD.* Romans 5:1-2

The King James Version often uses the word *TRUTH* in place of *FAITHFULNESS*. In the Old Testament, we find that the Israelites could not stay *FAITHFUL* and loyal to their Husband God on a consistent and regular basis. God, at that time, literally referred to Israel as harlots and adulterers because they would not remain *FAITHFUL* to Him, especially when they kept chasing after other gods.

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of *ISRAEL: FOR THE LORD HATH A CONTROVERSY WITH THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND, BECAUSE THERE IS NO TRUTH, NOR MERCY, NOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE LAND.* Hosea 4:1

²¹ *This I RECALL TO MY MIND, THEREFORE HAVE I HOPE. ²² IT IS OF THE LORD'S MERCIES THAT WE ARE NOT CONSUMED, BECAUSE HIS COMPASSIONS FAIL NOT. ²³ THEY ARE NEW EVERY MORNING: GREAT IS THY FAITH-FULNESS.* Lamentations 3:21-23

Are we chasing after other gods? The flesh is strong! Do our yearnings in satisfying the lusts for the material things and sensual desires of this life often sabotage our *FAITHFULNESS*? Maybe we are too busy to keep promises? How does our *FAITHFULNESS* to our mates or family and friends compare with our *FAITHFULNESS* to God? To whom or to what are

we dedicated? Are we changing at every turn of events because of lack of *FORGIVENESS*, or are we grounded through *FAITH* in and the mercy received from Father God.

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Psalm 86:15

As I began to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, one treasure the Holy Spirit grounded into my heart was the realization that His Word is holy.

... because of the Lord, and because of the *WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS*. Jeremiah 23:9

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets *IN_THE HOLY SCRIPTURES*.) Romans 1:2

If His Word is holy, than every word that we pray that is the Word of God will enter His holy throne room. His Word does not return unto Him void but accomplishes its purpose.

¹⁰ ... as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: ¹¹ SO SHALL MY WORD BE THAT GOETH FORTH OUT OF MY MOUTH: IT SHALL NOT RETURN UNTO ME VOID, BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH I PLEASE, AND IT SHALL PROSPER IN THE THING WHERETO I SENT IT. Isaiah 55:10-11

Why; because God's Word provides that everything that is holy has access to the throne of God.

God reigneth over the heathen: *GOD SITTETH UPON THE THRONE OF HIS HOLINESS*. Psalm 47:8

For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore *SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, AND YE SHALL BE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY*: Leviticus 11:44

In addition, when we asked for *FORGIVENESS* and accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we became holy because we have been washed in the

blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus. We are seen as white as snow through His blood.

¹⁰ *HE HATH NOT DEALT WITH US AFTER OUR SINS; NOR REWARDED US ACCORDING TO OUR INIQUITIES ...* ¹² *AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HATH HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US.* ¹³ *LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN, SO THE LORD PITIETH THEM THAT FEAR HIM.* ¹⁴ *FOR HE KNOWETH OUR FRAME; HE REMEMBERETH THAT WE ARE DUST.* Psalm 103:10, 12-14

... THOUGH YOUR SINS BE AS SCARLET, THEY SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW; THOUGH THEY BE RED LIKE CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BE AS WOOL. Isaiah 1:18

⁹ *... BEING NOW JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM.* ¹⁰ *FOR IF, WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES, WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, BEING RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.* Romans 5: 9-10

The Spirit further enlightened me to the fact that His Word is His will. Hence, by praying God's Word back to Him, we are praying Father God's will for whatever the situation may be. Our prayer must be, as Jesus prayed, "Thy will be done". His will is His Word. By *FAITH*; what we hope for, what we pray for, even though we cannot see, *His will be done*.

Now FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN. Hebrews 11:1

Through the years of the generous outpouring of the Holy Spirit's Wisdom into my life, it was also revealed to me that by *FAITH*, I can thank Father God in advance for the reality of every word of Scripture that I pray back to Him as if it has already occurred. It is His will that I pray by *FAITH*. I trust Him by *FAITH* to accomplish His purpose.

And that FROM A CHILD THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO

SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS. 2

Timothy 3:15

Initially, I would write out particular Scriptures that I claimed for my marriage, my children, for myself and for family and friends. Prayers for Salvation, *for it is God's will that all men know Him*; prayers for wisdom, His Word says to *call onto Him for wisdom*; prayers for healing, *for no weapon forged against us shall prosper and by His stripes we are healed*.

The more I prayed God's Word by *FAITH*, the more it became hidden in my heart. As it renewed my mind, the inner strength of His Word became rooted ever deep within my heart.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: *BIND THEM ABOUT THY NECK;*

WRITE THEM UPON THE TABLE OF THINE HEART: Proverbs 3:3

Soon, I would no longer need the verses, having memorized the same Scriptures through daily prayer. In addition, I would thank the Spirit of God, knowing that He is our *HOPE*; He is in control; He knows all things; and He already has the answer completed.

²⁴ For WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE: BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE: FOR WHAT A MAN SEETH, WHY DOTH HE YET HOPE FOR? ²⁵

BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT. Romans 8:24-25

As time progressed, I came to pray the Scriptures aloud. After all, God spoke and the world came into existence. Over and over, Scripture after Scripture; "and the Lord said", was what I read. God said His Word, and "*IT*" was audible. In addition, His Word pronounces:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Proverbs 18:21

Is this the fruit that we desire to speak into our lives and the lives of those around us by *FAITH* today? In spite of what we may or may not see about us; in spite of the lies that are being lambasted against us; and in spite of the gut wrenching ache we endeavor to suppress and endure over our current failures and forfeitures, are we keeping the *FAITH*?

I must admit that through it all, I am thankful to the Holy Spirit for the fertilizer produced through the many trials and temptations that I persevered on my life's sojourn thus far. Without such refining, "*HEM CLINGING*", as I referred to it, the spiritual growth of the seeds of *FAITH* would not have erupted through the heart soil of my life's Fruit of the Spirit garden. I would not have prayed God's Word. I would not have memorized that same Word. I would have a foundation built on sinking sand, and not on the ROCK.

FAITH eventually revealed the actuality of the answers to so many of my prayers. However, the prayers of *FAITH* for the varying aspects of my marriage, and the Scripture that I claimed and thank God for through those same petitions were taking what seemed like forever to sprout through the soil; never mind, realized and *FLOURISHING*. In addition, we were receiving an untried series of test and trials on this Redemption Road to heaven. The scenery of these changing seasons blessed us with continuing success. We were so accustomed to struggling for everything that this was a gratefully received reprieve.

However, it was not long until some of our new societal circles were drawing us away from, and not closer to the Lord. The deceitful lies and distraction of earthly pleasures began to negatively influence our renewed minds. No longer did I carve into my busy schedule daily quiet times that frequently prompted our children to whispered to their neighborhood friends, "mom is talking to God" as they quietly tiptoed through the house.

The novelty of suburbia with the many trinkets, shopping and the like began to fill my recently vacated *FAITH* filled voids. The amusements of these distractions similar to the initial enticements alluring me to stay in this country, beguiled me away from my *BLESSED ASSURANCE*. How long would our strained marriage survive without the strength provided by the Holy Spirit through His gift of *FAITH*? I was dancing right off the battleground of *FAITH* and into the trenches of failure.

As I have already stated, we had veered off Difficulty Avenue onto Opulence Way. Why did I need *FAITH*? Immeasurable temptations were exploding into the reality of our worldly riches. To some degree, we were

beginning to amass the personal effects I coveted during my high school imaginings. The rosy colored glasses now pictured me the conqueror. However, I was no longer a conqueror through Jesus Christ who had given me strength in my prior years of *HEM CLINGING*. I was no longer seeking refuge under God's wing.

**Nay, in all these things WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS
THROUGH HIM that loved us. Romans 8:37**

**I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH
STRENGTHENETH ME. Philippians 4:13**

**HE SHALL COVER THEE WITH HIS FEATHERS, AND UNDER HIS
WINGS SHALT THOU TRUST: HIS TRUTH SHALL BE THY SHIELD
AND BUCKLER. Psalm 91:4**

After years of what I believed to be my *FAITHFULNESS*, what despair might now lie ahead should I surrender to the deception of the discouraging lies of hell; choosing to exhale my last few breaths of *FAITH* on the battle line? Only time would reveal what blessings desired to be made available to me by the Holy Spirit might be forfeited because of such choices of disobedience. Have we too lost our *FAITH* in Him to perform His perfect will because His will does not look like our perfect will any longer? What may we or will we forfeit as a result?

Can we really be established in the *FAITHFULNESS* of the Holy Spirit without *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* and our profession of *FAITH*, our prayers of *FAITH*, our obedience of *FAITH*, and our perseverance of *FAITH*? If we are not grounded and soon to be rooted in the fruit of *FAITH*, then how might we grow and reproduce and *FLOURISH* in the *FAITH* of God for all the world to see, as we obediently fulfill, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*; our anointed and appointed purpose for being here.

**O LORD, THOU ART MY GOD; I WILL EXALT THEE, I WILL PRAISE
THY NAME; FOR THOU HAST DONE WONDERFUL THINGS; THY
COUNSELS OF OLD ARE FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH. Isaiah 25:1**

CHAPTER 9

MEEKNESS/GENTLENESS

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ *MEEKNESS*, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

MEEKNESS/GENTLENESS IS LOVE AT SCHOOL

MEEKNESS or *GENTLENESS* is the eighth Fruit of the Spirit. “*Praus*”, the Greek word for *MEEK*, was typically used in reference to the domestication of animals. In that context, the term does not suggest a transformation from a raging, uncontrollable creature to that of one whose spirit is now broken-down, crushed, listless, and wilting. The intent of its usage rather implies that the same raging, uncontrollable creature, retains such formidable and commanding characteristics, only now, such strengths are well guided and ordered by the skilled hands of its master.

That is exactly what God was saying through Paul, the apostle, who boldly faced his share of agonizing and heartbreaking persecutions with lowliness and *MEEKNESS*, as he writes in the letter to the Ephesians:

¹ ... WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED, ² WITH ALL LOWLINESS AND *MEEKNESS*, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Ephesians 4:1-2

The Greek word “*prautes*” is defined in Thayer's Greek Lexicon as: *mildness of disposition, GENTLENESS of spirit*. Fundamentally, the word suggests: *MEEKNESS, mildness, and GENTLENESS with HUMILITY*.

One might consider such an individual as having a soothing disposition, or an even balanced temperament; someone who is patient in enduring hurts without an attitude or spirit of revenge.

Yes, as we may now read this description together, I can just see and hear some of our varying reactions. If we were face to face, some may be sputtering such questions and indignations regarding the entire current goings on in our respective lives. Such dialogue related to loving and *FORGIVING* our enemies; being *GENTLE* and kind with lowliness, *MEEKNESS* and *HUMILITY*. We are to do *ALL* of this, plus, *NOT* bear some sort of spirit of revenge under our circumstances. One might think this to an unrealistic order!

I can pick up on someone's challenge right now: **"Looked at what has already been bestowed on this battered, beaten, bleeding, bloody and bruised body of a being, already bristling in the bitter blows of brokenness and lack of *FORGIVENESS*?"** It may have been months since we have even heard a *GENTLE* word! All we seem to hear anymore are the negative accusations, finger pointing *CONDEMNATION* and adverse facts of our present actuality. The foremost sounds we swallow are the sobbing realities welling up uncontrollably from within our shattered existences. Under our present-day conditions, we tend to be apprehensive of anyone offering a *GENTLE* touch for fear of their unknown, underlying, ulterior motives.

In consideration of the agonizing distressful dealings we may have endured over the past and present detoured routes, called our lives, and if this is a description of our respective encompassing circumstances, then I must say, speaking from experience, that we may be on the brink of a miracle. Might not such adversities and rigors be somewhat similar to the trials of the above referenced formerly uncontrollable and uncontainable beast that finally surrendered, yielding to the skilled hands of its master?

As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. Isaiah 63:14

The worldly definition of *MEEKNESS* is often pictured as a cowardly, dejected, and fragmented little man or woman; a rather weak, mealy mouse, wimpish individual. That vision does not portray our ideal of a great worldly leader. And yet, what did Jesus say in the *SERMON on the MOUNTAIN*?

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK: FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

Matthew 5:5

Was [Jesus](#) a cowardly, dejected, fragmented, weak and wimpish individual? From a worldly perspective some might say so. The world's ideal of the perfect man is very different from that of God's ideal. What does the Bible expound concerning Moses?

(NOW THE MAN MOSES WAS VERY MEEK, ABOVE ALL THE MEN WHICH WERE UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.) Numbers 12:3

If I read this correctly, according to worldly values, Moses was the wimpiest man of his time. However, better understanding of Biblical *MEEKNESS*, will evidence that both Jesus and Moses were powerful examples of true *MEEKNESS*. We read how Moses, a stuttering fool before a burning bush, emerged as the anointed leader of the Israelites. Why; because of the power of God Almighty, in the great exodus from Egypt.

¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, WHERE IS HE THAT BROUGHT THEM UP OUT OF THE SEA WITH THE SHEPHERD OF HIS FLOCK? WHERE IS HE THAT PUT HIS HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN HIM? ¹² THAT LED THEM BY THE RIGHT HAND OF MOSES WITH HIS GLORIOUS ARM, DIVIDING THE WATER BEFORE THEM, TO MAKE HIMSELF AN EVERLASTING NAME?

Isaiah 63:11-12

Ponder the tamed stallion, previously crowned king and dignifying the open range. What of his former power and strength? It is still within, but it is now under the control of his master's hands. Consider Jesus' controlled strength wherein one moment he is exposing the scribes and Pharisees for the hypocrisy of their legalist ways. He was simple, firm and straight forward with His instructive answers, and yet penetrating and thought provoking

with His incisive questions. Their twisted reasoning stimulated illuminating instruction to the listening ears and ever seeking eyes.

And yet, in the next moment, Jesus willingly pardoned sin, healed the sick and raised the dead. With others, Jesus was the expression of kindness, *GENTLENESS* and love. The Holy Spirit through the Word of God teaches us to be considerate, equitable, fair, forbearing, *FORGIVING* and reasonable. The application of these Spirit-filled lessons on *MEEKNESS* is so preferred that for those who choose to evidence this fruit in our hearts and lives, Jesus proclaims that such obedience will be rewarded by inheritance of the earth.

Are we demonstrating true *MEEKNESS*, lowliness and *HUMILITY* with *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*; or are we just lying down and surrendering to earthly powers and the gates of hell? Have we given up, contemplating that everything is so out of our control? Jesus definitely did not give up or take things "lying down." His reactions, just as ours, depended only on what we discern is the will of the Holy Spirit for the respective situation. Why; because, like Jesus with His Father, the *MEEK* set their minds on the Spirit of God's purpose; dying to self, and not on their own comfort, ambition or reputation.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is *YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE*. Romans 12:1

STOP! Don't close the book. Internally we may be arguing that we have spent years offering ourselves, to what we believe to be, a living sacrifice. Look at where it has gotten us. Let's think about that. The fruit of *MEEKNESS* overflows through us when we surrender what we believe to be our deserving rights; deliberately choosing to forego them. Only the Holy Spirit knows each of our hearts. Did we truthfully have the fruit of *MEEKNESS* as we relinquished our desires, wants or needs to those around us over the years?

Are we just talking the talk, trying to impress the world around us with our "spiritual knowledge"; or are we really walking the walk with a *HUMBLE*,

lowly *MEEK* heart; surrendering control to the hands of our Master Gardener, the Holy Spirit? Why should we react with patience, [kindness](#) and *GENTLENESS* when others attack, judge and *CONDEMN* our condition? Have they walked in our shoes?

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

Each of us may have different situation and orbs of present reality. And no, I cannot snap my fingers and make everything better. I do know that it hurts desperately. However, consider how much our sinful selves inflicted pain on our Savior at the cross. He *HUMBLED* Himself because He loves us.

For us, human retaliation is not the answer. The Spirit of God sees and knows *ALL*. We must remember that our protection comes for our *FORGIVENESS*, and our obedience to the Holy Spirit's workings. If we are seeking Him and submitting to His will, then I would say that we definitely do not want to be on the receiving end of His wrath imparted on those who may do us harm; like our enemies. No matter how much the inner flesh desires to lash out at the circumstances, remember He can avenge us much better than we could ever imagine.

Dearly beloved, *AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD.* Romans 12:19

Jesus, with uncompromising, impassioned strength and force made a whip out of rope and overturned the tables, driving the livestock and moneychangers from the temple. Why we may ask; because in their sacrilege, God's house had been turned into a marketplace. Do we display such a rigid resistance to evil in defense of Father God, or do we, because of unjust wrongs, accuse, attack and harbor bitterness and lack of *FORGIVENESS*?

Does Jesus' behavior fall in line with the worldly definition of *MEEKNESS*? Was Jesus unambitious, retiring, malfunctioning, inoperative,

defective, broken-down, worn-out and kaput? No! Jesus knew how to rule His spirit well. He has the power and chose to do the will of His Father. We too can choose to receive the same power of the Holy Spirit. If we have asked Jesus for *FORGIVENESS* from our sins and have accepted Him into our hearts, then we have the power of His Holy Spirit within.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *YE SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST*. Acts 2:38

But *YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU ...* Acts 1:8

What; do we think that we have to walk through these cataclysmic events mealy-mouse, defeated, inoperative, defective, broken-down, worn-out and kaput? No! Remember:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, *I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE*. Hebrews 13:5

And we know that *ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE*. Romans 8:28

Some use the term *HUMILITY* as an equivalent for *MEEKNESS*. Others use the term *GENTLENESS* as an equivalent. However, even though both are part of the meaning of *MEEKNESS* neither term catches the significance intended by the Holy Spirit. In reality, it is neither. We learned of Jesus' controlled strength in His handling of the sellers at the temple. We are reminded again of the wild stallion, its power and strength controlled by the power of its caring master's hand.

We also learned of Jesus' mildness combined with tenderness; His graciousness and kindly disposition. He revealed a nature that was even-tempered, tranquil, balanced in spirit, unpretentious, with a passion that was under control. Jesus describes himself as *MEEK*.

***TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN OF ME; FOR I AM MEEK
AND LOWLY IN HEART: AND YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR
SOULS. Matthew 11:29***

Sometimes when warriors have been in the midst of a battle too long, their eye sight becomes blurry from the many small particles of debris associated with the battle. To continue the fight with accurate onslaught, a reprieve may be in order to clear the eyes; hence realizing victory. Such reprieve may only be found in the arms of our ABBA, Father God. As the battles for our souls, and the souls of family and friends wage in and around us amidst the devastating lies of hell, what sweet surrender awaits us, when we yield, as the wild stallion, under the sovereign control of our Master's hands.

***COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. Matthew 11:28***

To be *MEEK* is just that; to be submissive to the will of the Holy Spirit. It is then that we will not be too proud to learn as we *HUMBLE* ourselves and reveal our hearts; a teachable spirit. It is then that we will learn to be *FORGIVING*, and to *HUMBLE* ourselves and ask *FORGIVENESS*. And, it is then that we can *HUMBLE* ourselves; lowering ourselves to consider first the needs and wants of others. Yes, a *MEEK* person feels the wrongs done against them, but so did Jesus feel *ALL* of the wrongs done against Him prior to and upon the cross. Yes, He felt the pain of it *ALL*, bitterly. However, He was not thinking of Himself. What did He say on the cross?

***Then said Jesus, FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT
WHAT THEY DO. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. Luke 23:34***

The *MEEKNESS* fruit of the Holy Spirit diffuses our need to vent and act on our vindictive [anger](#); seeking to “*get even*”. The Spirit knows that we are but flesh, and teaches us through the Word, to have pity for the marred character, mindsets and impetuosity of the offender; to instead, pray for them.

***¹³ LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN, SO THE LORD
PITIETH THEM THAT FEAR HIM. ¹⁴ FOR HE KNOWETH OUR
FRAME; HE REMEMBERETH THAT WE ARE DUST. Psalm 103:13-14***

Do we long for the Spirit of God to cultivate within each of us this inner character of control; exhibited through calm assurance? That was one of the characteristics or strengths that initially attraction me to my husband. How did he manage to contain and control all of his emotion within his inner being? As I recall my childhood rearing in the dynamics of an Irish family, as described in previous chapters, we left no evidence of concealment and/or control of our emotions. We wore them on our sleeves. One always knew just where they stood on a matter at the moment it became evident.

***HE THAT HATH NO RULE OVER HIS OWN SPIRIT IS LIKE A CITY
THAT IS BROKEN DOWN, AND WITHOUT WALLS. Proverbs 25:28***

In retrospect, I may consider my hubby to be a passive character. However, after reading the lives of Jesus and Moses, I would not frame their *MEEKNESS* as passive. The fruit of *MEEKNESS* does not hide as a wallflower in the shadows; there is no inadequacy found in the harvest of *MEEKNESS*. Envision our lives *FLOURISHING* under the complete confident assurance of the Holy Spirit; fertilized by the Spirit through our obedience, *FORGIVENESS*, and submission to the Word. I know we may having a little difficultly doing that right now, but work with me here. Oh that we obediently submitted to do exactly what the Spirit of God desires and prerequisites for us to do in order that He may accomplish His perfect purpose in each of our abundantly *FLOURISHING* Fruit of the Spirit gardens.

***¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ FOR THE GOOD
THAT I WOULD I DO NOT: BUT THE EVIL WHICH I WOULD NOT,
THAT I DO. ²⁰ NOW IF I DO THAT I WOULD NOT, IT IS NO MORE I
THAT DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME. ²¹ I FIND THEN A
LAW, THAT, WHEN I WOULD DO GOOD, EVIL IS PRESENT WITH ME.
²² FOR I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD AFTER THE INWARD MAN:
²³ BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING AGAINST
THE LAW OF MY MIND, AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO
THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS. ²⁴ O WRETCHED MAN***

***THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS
DEATH? Romans 7:18-24***

Do we trustingly know and accept that what comes into our lives is all hand-delivered as part of our Maker and Master's perfect plan? He longs to beautify us in His spa of life. Sometimes those beauty treatments are painful. However, after a prune here and a tuck there, it will not be long before we become a healed splendor of the Master's work; evidencing a *FLOURISHING*, abundant and overflowing harvest of *MEEKNESS*. Painful, yes; but perfect results, if we follow His therapy!

And might not the radiant brilliance of the Master's work attract others to us? How wonderful it would be that we may then open up the door of Salvation, inviting those that intersect our divinely appointed paths to receive Jesus. Oh, the privilege to be chosen to share the healing, saving, and deliverance power of His Holy Spirit for their lives.

***He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if
this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, **THY WILL BE
DONE.** Matthew 26:42***

***Thy kingdom come, **THY WILL BE DONE** in earth, as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:10***

Oh, Holy Spirit, "*Thy will be done*". Break us, melt us and mold us to Your beautiful image. In the midst of the stench of hell that we each may be walking through today, let us choose to be the sweet fragrance of You to all those that may traverse our way. Let us not be passive and spineless, but mighty and bold with *MEEKNESS* in the power of Your Spirit to a lost and dying world. Let others sense Your presence in us as the sweet fragrance of You explodes onto the dark streets of loneliness, abandonment, estrangements, separations and even, divorces. Let them ask us for the reason for the hope that is in us as we travel down Despairingly Lane.

***Now thanks be unto **GOD**, which **ALWAYS CAUSETH US TO TRIUMPH
IN CHRIST, AND MAKETH MANIFEST THE SAVOUR OF HIS
KNOWLEDGE BY US IN EVERY PLACE.** 2 Corinthians 2:14***

Hasn't Satan robbed and stolen from our lives long enough? We may not enjoy the return of an estrangement today or ever, but the Holy Spirit promised to never leave or forsake us. He longs to restore unto us the years the locust ate and bring us into His Promised Land. Through *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*, there within this Fruit of Spirit garden, the fruit of *MEEKNESS* may abound to us as an inheritance of the earth.

*²³ BE GLAD THEN, ye children of Zion, and REJOICE IN THE LORD
your God ²⁵ And I WILL RESTORE TO YOU THE YEARS THAT THE
LOCUST HATH EATEN, Joel 2:23, 25*

CHAPTER 10

TEMPERANCE/SELF-CONTROL

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, ***TEMPERANCE***: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

TEMPERANCE/SELF-CONTROL IS LOVE IN TRAINING

We may have each already undergone enough personal and public *CONDEMNATION* on this lonely pilgrimage of finger pointing and lack of *FORGIVENESS* to wish for any further analysis of and/or training related to our corresponding character flaws and/or our associated lack of spiritual fruit production. However, if Jesus is our Savior, then there is therefore **NO CONDEMNATION** from Him. Earnestly seeking to tend our respective Fruit of the Spirit gardens, the Holy Spirit longingly only desires to shower us with His abundant love. However, that *LOVE*, or rather specifically, fruit of *TEMPERANCE/SELF-CONTROL* is often a time enduring self-disciplined workout.

There is therefore now *NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.* Romans 8:1

For some individuals, certain Fruits of the Spirit readily thrive in their respective hearts' gardens. For others, their plots may require continuous weeding, pruning and fertilizing until the fruit born begins to have some semblance of resemblance to that of which the Holy Spirit intended. The

flesh weeds must be destroyed in order for the Spirit fruit to *FLOURISH*. I am going to venture a guess that the ninth Fruit of the Spirit, *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL* may be such a product in our lives. This fruit often demands additional divine devotion in order to thrive in some of our current rocky patches situated amongst our gardens. Am I correct in that assumption? God is well aware that our spirits and our flesh will readily war against each other in this section of our respective plots. As expressed to us by the Holy Spirit through Paul in the letter to the Romans:

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ FOR THE GOOD THAT I WOULD I DO NOT: BUT THE EVIL WHICH I WOULD NOT, THAT I DO. Romans 7:18-19

The Greek word “*enkrateia*” as defined in the Thayer's Greek Lexicon is translated *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL*. Various sources define these two words as follows: ***a calm and dispassionate approach to life, having mastered personal desires and passions, rational restraint of natural impulses, and sober***, to list but a few. These are some of the same characteristics that initially attracted me to my hubby.

Without the Spirit's gift of *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL*, how will we achieve victory over our fleshly demands? Will not *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* and obedience be the necessary nutrients the Spirit necessitates to ultimately stimulate the abundant harvest of *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL* within these stony spaces of our Fruit of the Spirit gardens?

ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL UNTO ME, BUT ALL THINGS ARE NOT EXPEDIENT: ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT I WILL NOT BE BROUGHT UNDER THE POWER OF ANY. 1 Corinthians 6:12

In our society today, there is a war going on in and for our flesh; ever-demanding immediate self-gratification. There is instant coffee, instant breakfast, and instant text messaging. We seek fast food restaurants, movies on demand, and speedy oil changes; all instant, fast, speedy, and now, now,

now! We can charge this and borrow that; releasing the endorphin high of our personal self pleasures. Is that what God really desires for our lives?

MEATS FOR THE BELLY, AND THE BELLY FOR MEATS: BUT GOD SHALL DESTROY BOTH IT AND THEM. NOW THE BODY IS NOT FOR FORNICATION, BUT FOR THE LORD; AND THE LORD FOR THE BODY. 1 Corinthians 6:13

Are we choosing to provide for ourselves and not wait on the abundant overflowing gracious gifts that come from the Spirit of God? He has already preplanned when we are better able to enjoy and manage them; if we are obedient. We have alcoholics anonymous, drug addicts anonymous, overeaters anonymous, sex addiction anonymous, and shoppers anonymous, to name just a few! *ANONYMOUS*; don't we know that the Holy Spirit knows who we each are? We are not anonymous to Him.

HE THAT HATH NO RULE OVER HIS OWN SPIRIT IS LIKE A CITY THAT IS BROKEN DOWN, AND WITHOUT WALLS. Proverbs 25:28

Many of us have poor impulse control. Some may say; my way or the highway. There are: anger management classes for our bad tempers; smoke cessation classes for controlling our infantile oral fixations; and sleep deprivation treatments, promising to lull us into hibernation; hence avoiding all the bad choices and decisions that may be keeping us awake at night with worry.

FOR HE THAT SOWETH TO HIS FLESH SHALL OF THE FLESH REAP CORRUPTION; BUT HE THAT SOWETH TO THE SPIRIT SHALL OF THE SPIRIT REAP LIFE EVERLASTING. Galatians 6:8

Due to our sinful natures, we are all weak to some degree and lack *SELF-CONTROL*. Whether it is a marital affair, drugs and/or alcohol or, pick your vice, each temptation allows us some form of temporary escape from our many problems. These quick fixes will not fill the void; nor will they provide the enduring satisfaction extended to each of us by the creative work of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit can "*FILL US UP*". However, obedience and *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* will be required on our part to ensure the accomplishment of His perfect purpose. These ingredients,

saturated with the Word of God, will be the only fertilizer/pesticide combo that will keep the pleasure seeking, bad choice consequential weeds at bay, and cause our respective hearts' Fruit of the Spirit gardens to *FLOURISH*.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; *THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING: THE WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU, THEY ARE SPIRIT, AND THEY ARE LIFE.* John 6:63

My life's encounters and challenging disposition have found me oftentimes at odds with not only my spouse but with God as well. Our Irish families' problem resolution techniques of defending defiant fist a cuffs and brawling wrestling bouts often afford me, the eldest, victory in many of such contests. And still, as an anointed and appointed adult, I continue to embark on spiritual wrestling matches with the Holy Spirit. But like Jacob wrestling with the angel, I do not claim victory in these bouts.

**²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there *WRESTLED A MAN WITH HIM UNTIL THE BREAKING OF THE DAY.* ²⁵ And when he saw that *HE PREVAILED NOT AGAINST HIM, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and THE HOLLOW OF JACOB'S THIGH WAS OUT OF JOINT, AS HE WRESTLED WITH HIM.* ²⁶ And he said, *Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I WILL NOT LET THEE GO, EXCEPT THOU BLESS ME*
... Genesis 32:24-26**

Why do we just not surrender and face the fact that our God *ALWAYS WINS*? If we do not have the training provided by the Holy Spirit's gift of *SELF-CONTROL* guiding us, we will not have the strength or the power for victory over our sinful natures. I cannot tell count how many times I have had my spiritual hip broken. Again, God *ALWAYS WINS*! Why do we want to be slaves to our flesh, to ourselves and to Satan? That is not what the Spirit of God intended for us.

***FOR WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES, AGAINST POWERS, AGAINST THE RULERS OF THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD, AGAINST SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES.* Ephesians 6:12**

For IF YE LIVE AFTER THE FLESH, YE SHALL DIE: but IF YE THROUGH THE SPIRIT DO MORTIFY THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, YE SHALL LIVE. Romans 8:13

Without *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL*, bad tempers will continue to rage, judgments will continue to be delivered and critical spirits will continue to wound; ravaging the innocent. Our Fruit of the Spirit gardens may be overtaken with the weeds of lack of *FORGIVENESS*, bitterness, judgment, lust, pride, etc.; choking out the Spirit's desired *FLOURISHING* bounty of fruits.

²³ **But I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND, AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN which is in my members.** ²⁴ **O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?** ²⁵ **I THANK GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. So then WITH THE MIND I MYSELF SERVE THE LAW OF GOD; BUT WITH THE FLESH THE LAW OF SIN. Romans 7:23-25**

The mind is the battleground. How is our *SELF-CONTROL* barometer? Maybe we have been kind to our neighbor, only to return home and salaciously eat half a cake. Are we continually serving at every church function wherein the doors of the building are open, only to return to our sanctuary homes and bow low to the god of TV? Whom or what are we going to choose to serve; the flesh or the Spirit of God?

... LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL FILTHINESS OF THE FLESH AND SPIRIT, PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.
2 Corinthians 7:1

We have a free will. Our mind's choice will not be forced on us by the Spirit of God. Will our short-term gratification of the flesh provide us long-term peace with God? Who will we hurt by our mind decisions due to our lack of *SELF-CONTROL*? Maybe we have been hurt by the self lusting outcomes of others' mind choices. Where will we find the victory? Remember, the mind is the battleground.

... WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:6

²⁴ Know ye not that *THEY WHICH RUN IN A RACE RUN ALL, BUT ONE RECEIVETH THE PRIZE? SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN ...* ²⁷ But I KEEP UNDER MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY. 1 Corinthians 9:24, 27

Who is tempting us, God or this wretched flesh? So, “*oh wretched man*”, as the Scriptures specify, who will deliver us?

¹³ LET NO MAN SAY WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD: FOR GOD cannot be tempted with evil, NEITHER TEMPTETH HE ANY MAN: ¹⁴ But EVERY MAN IS TEMPTED, WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY OF HIS OWN LUST, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then WHEN LUST HATH CONCEIVED, IT BRINGETH FORTH SIN: AND SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH. ¹⁶ Do not err, my beloved brethren. James 1:13-16

The Greek word “*epithumia*” as defined in the Thayer's Greek Lexicon means *desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, and lust*. The Thayer's Greek Lexicon also defines “*porneia*” as *fornication*. God’s Word provides us a means of escape, empowering us to stay away from and keep away from every form of sexual practice outside the marriage bed. Such practices include but are not limited to adultery, premarital and extramarital sexual exploits, homosexuality, etc.

¹⁸ **FLEE FORNICATION.** Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but HE THAT COMMITTETH FORNICATION SINNETH AGAINST HIS OWN BODY. ¹⁹ 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? ²⁰ For YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6: 18-20

So how do we master these cravings, desires, fornications and lust? We must make Godly choices! How do we make Godly choices? We must learn

how to avoid situations and circumstances that would draw us away to such things. By making Godly choices, we choose through God's Word, how to control our own bodies with all of its raging passions.

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

So how do we have His mind so that we may make these Godly choices; so that we are obedient? The Holy Spirit through this Scripture verse provides us one of the most valuable gifts of revelation. So with **OUR MIND** we choose to be **RENEWED THROUGH HIS WORD**. Recall how I wrote that I was praying the Word back to God? As I prayed, and continually repeated through prayer, I was memorizing the Word. As I memorized the Word, I was renewing my mind; hence, I have the mind of Christ.

And BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND; Ephesians 4:23

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? BUT WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. I Corinthians 2:16

When we asked for **FORGIVENESS** and allowed Jesus to be Lord of our lives, the Spirit of God was birthed into each of our Fruit of the Spirit hearts' gardens through His gift of Salvation. Now we, not only have God's mercy, but through our **FORGIVENESS** of self and others, as combined with our obedience, may renew our minds through the Spirit's whispered Word. It is then and only then that we may begin to renew our minds and think His thought and meditate on His ways. It is then and only then that we may choose to flee the negative, lustful or destructive thoughts that may be trapping and stealing our fruit of **SELF-CONTROL**, and focus on God's way and will.

¹¹ FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN, ¹² TEACHING US THAT, DENYING UN-GODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS PRESENT WORLD; ¹³ LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF

THE GREAT GOD AND OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; ¹⁴ WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. Titus 2:11-14

A series of events in my marriage broke my heart. Because of that heart break, I lost my *FAITH* in not only my husband, but my *FAITH* in God also. I was blaming Him for the actions of my spouse. In my anger and loss of *FAITH*, I chose to no longer have the mind of Christ. Not having the mind of Christ left me unprotected to the lusts of the flesh and Satan's attacks. Fanning this anger and flaming passion of loneliness within, diminished my resistance and *SELF-CONTROL* to temptations without. I played the harlot to not only my husband, but to my God as well.

³ but *THOU HAST PLAYED THE HARLOT* with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord ... ¹² ... *RETURN*, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; *AND I WILL NOT CAUSE MINE ANGER TO FALL UPON YOU: FOR I AM MERCIFUL*, saith the Lord, and *I WILL NOT KEEP ANGER FOR EVER*. ¹³ *ONLY ACKNOWLEDGE THINE INIQUITY, THAT THOU HAST TRANSGRESSED AGAINST THE LORD THY GOD ...* and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord ¹⁴ *TURN, O BACKSLIDING CHILDREN*, saith the Lord; *FOR I AM MARRIED UNTO YOU*: Jeremiah 3: 3, 12-14

Though desires were given to us by our Maker for good, we have an enemy who seeks to corrupt these same desires and cause us to seek ungodly ways of fulfilling our selfish needs. Maybe we were the one watching as lack of *FORGIVENESS* and lack of *SELF-CONTROL* or *TEMPERANCE* moved into the lives of our friends, family, or mate, as they played the harlot. It does not matter who has been disobedient. What matters is how we choose to respond to the tests and trials that come are way.

Shall we make the choice to follow the Word of God, and grow in His grace and knowledge? Shall we appropriate His power, hence passing the tests that are placed before us with His strength? The intent of all tests and trials

is to make us more like Him; allowing His Light to shine through us. How would He respond?

⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, *ADD TO YOUR FAITH VIRTUE; AND TO VIRTUE KNOWLEDGE;* ⁶ *AND TO KNOWLEDGE TEMPERANCE; AND TO TEMPERANCE PATIENCE; AND TO PATIENCE GODLINESS;* ⁷ *AND TO GODLINESS BROTHERLY KINDNESS; AND TO BROTHERLY KINDNESS CHARITY.* 2 Peter 1:5-7

Or, shall we give up the *FAITH* as I chose to do in the past, and fail the test by choosing to follow the ways of the flesh and Satan? We cannot afford to be controlled by our desires. Take it from my experience; we must cling to the hem of His garment no matter what we see with our eyes. Our ways are not His ways. It is more important that we become more like Him; clinging to His *SELF-CONTROL*, trusting in His will. That result will be far superior than formulating any forgone conclusion provided to us from the gates of hell. We must walk in the Holy Spirit so that we may not be controlled by the lusts of flesh.

¹⁶ This I say then, *WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH.* ¹⁷ *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 5:16-17

Never in my wildest imaginings, did I ever believe that I would choose to commit this series of sins against not only my mate but against my Father God as well. From my receipt of *FORGIVENESS* at the foot of the cross, to the many days of sweet quiet fellowship combined with the renewal of my mind by His whispering Word that followed, did I ever consider this added burden of disobedience, inflicting more pain on my Jesus at the cross.

¹ ... *WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED,* ² *WITH ALL LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;* Ephesians 4:1-2

Every moment of this spiritual walk must be a continual humble humbling assignment. We are never completely perfected here on earth. Our arrival is complete when we reach heaven. We constantly must be alert to the wiles of the devil, as we endure and grow in the grace and the knowledge of God with humility. This humility must ever be by our sides lest we become puffed up and fall cataclysmically, as I did.

Maybe it was my pride. Maybe it was all the distractions. I do not know and will not waste my energy speculating on sin any longer. It proves to me just how cunning the enemy and sin can be. It also demonstrated just how ill prepared we often are for some of our major trial battles and tugs of wars tests. Praise be to God Who through His loving desire, and by His grace and mercy, tenderly develops the fruit of *TEMPERANCE* or *SELF-CONTROL* in each of our Fruit of the Spirit hearts' gardens.

For the short term, yes, the fall in my life frustrated the purpose of God. However, HE is in control. He began a good work in me as He has in each of us. He promised to never leave or forsake us. The grounding that transpired through my earlier spiritual growth spurts, the hiding of His whispered Words in my heart, did not leave me. I tried to drown them out, but even throughout my rebellion, others saw a strength and a *PRESENCE* within me that they could not identify, no matter my actions at the time.

And when I finally surrendered and trusted, no longer challenging and wrestling, it would be the *FORGIVING* arms of Father God, much the same as the father of the prodigal son, that would catch me in His mercy and heal me with His Word. He would again cause my Fruit of the Spirit garden to thrive through His *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*. The choice is the Word. The battle is in the mind. We must be obedient to think His Words and meditate on His ways; to think on the good and not on the bad.

... but WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. 1 Corinthians 2:16

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS:

Philippians 2:5

That HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD, Ephesians 5:26

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

⁷ And *THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.*

⁸ Finally, brethren, *WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS.*

⁹ *THOSE THINGS, WHICH YE HAVE BOTH LEARNED, AND RECEIVED, AND HEARD, AND SEEN IN ME, DO: AND THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU.* Philippians 4:7-9

Jesus has already told us that He is the vine and we are the branches. The branches draw their life from the vine, not vice versa. So too must we, the branch, draw our *TEMPERANCE/SELF-CONTROL*, our life, directly from our Vine, Jesus. Releasing His Word and the resulting *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* through the Holy Spirit, will be the only necessary nourishment in each of our respective Fruit of the Spirit gardens that will produce the perfect *TEMPERANCE/SELF-CONTROL* Fruit of the Spirit from the true Vine of Life. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

I AM THE VINE

¹ I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

⁶ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

¹² This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. ¹⁵ Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ These things I command you, that ye love one another. ¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. **John**

15:1-19

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

²² But the ***FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS*** LOVE,
JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH,
²³ MEEKNESS, TEMP-ERANCE: against such there is no law. Galatians
5:22-23

How are the fruitlets in our respective Fruit of the Spirit orchards growing today? Are the spring and/or fall lack of *FORGIVENESS* cankerworms engorging themselves on the lush leaves of our fruit grove; inhibiting a *FLOURISHING* abundant healthy mature harvest? Or, through *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* and our submissive obedience infused with God's Word, have we allowed the *Husbandman*, the Holy Spirit, to fertilize, tend, prune and trim His grove; thereby yielding a bumper crop; an overflowing abundant ingathering?

... *THE HUSBANDMAN WAITETH FOR THE PRECIOUS FRUIT OF
THE EARTH, AND HATH LONG PATIENCE FOR IT, James 5:7*

As presented in the preceding chapters, through our receipt of, and our giving of *FORGIVENESS*, our obedience, and the Word of God fortified into our minds, the Holy Spirit, through His painstakingly patient nurture, is able to cultivate within each of us a bountiful harvest of each of His nine Fruits of the Spirit. His ultimate purpose for each of our lives is to not only create a desire in each of us to *LOVE* Him and receive His overflowing abundant *AGAPE LOVE*, but He requires that each of us also reflect that same *LOVE* to the lost and dying world around us. This is accomplished not only in our receiving the *FORGIVENESS* as provided by Jesus, but also by our giving *FORGIVENESS*; *FORGIVING* not only ourselves, but those around us; *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*.

After all, we have been made in His likeness, and as His representatives, we are to evidence, imitate, manifest, and reveal the Holy Spirit's: *LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONG-SUFFERING (PATIENCE), GENTLENESS (KINDNESS), GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS (GENTLENESS), and TEMPERANCE (SELF-CONTROL)* to Him, to our families and friends, to our church, and most importantly to the world at large; to the lost strangers in every place of the earth.

.... In the day that GOD CREATED MAN, IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD made he him. Genesis 5:1

HE THAT HATH MY COMMANDMENTS, AND KEEPETH THEM, HE IT IS THAT LOVETH ME: and HE THAT LOVETH ME SHALL BE LOVED OF MY FATHER, and I WILL LOVE HIM, AND WILL MANIFEST MYSELF TO HIM. John 14:21

Now thanks be unto *GOD*, which *ALWAYS CAUSETH US TO TRIUMPH IN CHRIST, AND MAKETH MANIFEST THE SAVOUR OF HIS KNOWLEDGE BY US IN EVERY PLACE. 2 Corinthians 2:14*

The Spirit's purpose for each of our lives is that we would be His Light; a magnetism, a fragrance or savor of Him for all the world to see, to smell and to know. He would that all men would know Him; and fall in *LOVE* with Him. He died to save *ALL* men from eternal damnation. All we have to do is call upon Him. He is ready to *FORGIVE* when we fall. Whether we have been wronged or we are the wrongdoers, in both cases, *FORGIVENESS* and mercy will always be available from God. Jesus paid our bill; our debt; He is our *FORGIVENESS* from sin!

The Holy Spirit is assigned to pick us up, dust us off, and set us back in our respective Fruit of the Spirit gardens. His purpose is to literally, weed, feed, prune, hoe, and pesticide us. Why; because He *LOVES* us, He *FORGIVES* us, and He wants to have a relationship with us. There is be *NO CONDEMNATION* from Him; mercy, yes, *CONDEMNATION*, no. If we confess our sins, no matter how grave, Jesus is *FAITHFUL* and just to *FORGIVE* us those sins; and *LOVE* us besides. What *JOY*! Our choice will be to remain *FLOURISHING* in His Fruit of the Spirit garden designed

specifically for us. There, we will be required to release *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* as evidence of our obedience.

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. 1 John 1:9

There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT. Romans 8:1

Looking around the scrapyards of what some of us may presently call, our lives, we may wonder how the Holy Spirit will turn this fragmented landscape into a *FLOURISHING* Fruit of the Spirit garden. There are mounds and possibly mountains of anger, bitterness, brokenness, disappointment, discouragement, lack of *FORGIVENESS*, etc. All such buried deep within our respective broken-down, somewhat inoperative, shattered and smashed Fruit of the Spirit gardens turned junkyards. Only a miracle could repair such a field of cracked and crushed dreams.

In the Old Testament, we learn that Job also had suffered significant calamity and loss; maybe more than any of us could imagine? He bore the loss of his children, his livestock, his house, and much more; but not his blessed wife. What did Job do?

²⁰ Then JOB AROSE, AND RENT HIS MANTLE, AND SHAVED HIS HEAD, AND FELL DOWN UPON THE GROUND, AND WORSHIPPED, ²¹ And said, NAKED CAME I OUT OF MY MOTHER'S WOMB, AND NAKED SHALL I RETURN THITHER: THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD. ²² IN ALL THIS JOB SINNED NOT, NOR CHARGED GOD FOOLISHLY. Job 1:20-22

What was his wife's response to such a turn in cataclysmic events? Remember, she has experienced the same demise. She advised Job to curse God and die. Our trash heap can't be as great as Job's aftermaths. And how did Job reply to his appalling wife's recount, even after boils began erupting all over his body?

⁹ Then said *HIS WIFE UNTO HIM, DOST THOU STILL RETAIN THINE INTEGRITY? CURSE GOD, AND DIE.* ¹⁰ But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? *SHALL WE RECEIVE GOOD AT THE HAND OF GOD, AND SHALL WE NOT RECEIVE EVIL?* In all this did not Job sin with his lips. Job 2:9-10

Oh my word, I could not believe his response the first time I read this, and I pray I will always recall it. We often rejoice when good things happen, but can we honestly say that we are grateful, *JOYFUL*, and can praise God when the evil comes; when the chiseling notches a little too deep; when the bandage removal tears away not only our hair and attached skin, but also the scab of which the dressing was protecting.

THE THIEF COMETH NOT, BUT FOR TO STEAL, AND TO KILL, AND TO DESTROY: I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY. John 10:10

Yes, the thief has come to steal, to kill and to destroy our *LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING (PATIENCE), GENTLENESS (KINDNESS), GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS (GENTLENESS), TEMPERANCE (SELF-CONTROL)*. But Jesus came in order that we might have eternal life and that our eternal Fruit of the Spirit gardens' harvests will be abounding with *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*, and abundant fruit.

¹ *FRET NOT THYSELF BECAUSE OF EVILDOERS*, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. ² For *THEY SHALL SOON BE CUT DOWN LIKE THE GRASS*, and wither as the green herb. ³ *TRUST IN THE LORD, AND DO GOOD; so shalt THOU DWELL IN THE LAND, and verily THOU SHALT BE FED.* Psalm 37:1-3

Remember, Jesus is also our Protector, our Provider, and our Savior. He is crazy about us. As an expression of that *LOVE*, the Spirit of God feeds and clothes us. He shelters and cares for us; and most importantly, he *LOVES* us with an everlasting *LOVE*. He is our *PEACE*. All that He requests is for us to delight in Him; commit our way to Him; rest in Him; and wait *PATIENTLY* on Him. The Holy Spirit longs for our *LOVE*, and in return, the Spirit covets to give us the desires of our heart!

⁴ DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD: and HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART. ⁵ COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD; TRUST ALSO IN HIM; AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS ... ⁷ REST IN THE LORD, and WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM: **FRET NOT THYSELF BECAUSE OF HIM WHO PROSPERETH IN HIS WAY, BECAUSE OF THE MAN WHO BRINGETH WICKED DEVICES TO PASS. ⁸ **CEASE FROM ANGER, AND FORSAKE WRATH: FRET NOT THYSELF IN ANY WISE TO DO EVIL.****

Psalm 37:4-5, 7-8

We may not perceive our desires right now. The renovation and overhaul associated with the pruning and trimming, and uprooting and weeding, may cause our Fruit of the Spirit gardens to look rather sparse, puny, naked, stripped, or more. However, a severe cutting back or transplant to a new location may ultimately result in a burgeoning *FLOURISH* in the not too distant future; with overwhelming blooms, necessary for high yielding fruit. But what is requires of us to receive these bountiful blessings? **CEASE FROM ANGER, AND FORSAKE WRATH: FRET NOT THYSELF IN ANY WISE TO DO EVIL.** If I understand this correctly, we are to stop being angry, and put fury, madness and rage behind us. We are to no longer agonize, fuss, hassle and worry about anything to include evil, bitterness, disappointments, discouragements, and rejections. Most important of all, we are to produce a harvest of *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*.

But I did not do anything wrong, we may respond. Yes, we did. We were prideful, lacked humility and/or were *UNFORGIVING*. Do a little soul searching; *ALL* have sinned! What did Jesus do for us on the cross? He died for us, but before He died, He said:

... FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO ... Luke 23:34

**For ALL HAVE SINNED, AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD;
Romans 3:23**

In review, each of the Fruit of the Spirit has the power to help break, melt, and mold us to the renewed image for God's divine purpose. His will is that

we touch the world around us with His *GOODNESS* and *KINDNESS*, His all encapsulating *AGAPE LOVE*. As I said earlier, *AGAPE LOVE* encompasses all the Fruit of the Spirit. However, God's will cannot be accomplished if we are crippled with the sins of bitterness, criticism, judgment, lust, rejection, lack of *FORGIVENESS*, etc.

***... ALL DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED FORTH MY HANDS UNTO A
DISOBEDIENT AND GAINSAING PEOPLE. Romans 10:21***

Father God has pursued Israel and *FORGIVEN* them time and again; longingly stretching out His hands to receive them. He made a way for us; *FORGIVING* us through Jesus' blood. Just as God *FORGAVE* Israel through their sin and rebellion, He too has made a way to *FORGIVE* us.

***⁶ HUMBLE YOURSELVES therefore UNDER THE MIGHTY HAND OF
GOD, THAT HE MAY EXALT YOU IN DUE TIME: ⁷ CASTING ALL
YOUR CARE UPON HIM; FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU. ⁸ BE SOBER, BE
VIGILANT; BECAUSE YOUR AD-VERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A
ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT, SEEKING WHOM HE MAY
DEVOUR: ⁹ WHOM RESIST STEDFAST IN THE FAITH, KNOWING
THAT THE SAME AF-FLICTIONS ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN YOUR
BRETHREN that are in the world. ¹⁰ But the GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO
HATH CALLED US UNTO HIS ETERNAL GLORY BY CHRIST JESUS,
AFTER THAT YE HAVE SUFFERED A WHILE, MAKE YOU PERFECT,
STABLISH, STRENG-THEN, SETTLE YOU. ¹¹ To him be glory and
dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:6-11***

If we are willing to be *MEEK*, humbling ourselves, God will exalt us in His times. We may soon recognize that He cares for us and that we are nothing aside from Him. However, it is imperative that we remain diligent in seeking Him in this intimate relationship; to stay connected to Him by *FAITH*. If that is not our mission then pride may set in. I shared what happened with me; the devil roving about, seeks whom he may destroy; seeks who may be wobbling in their *FAITH*; one such as myself. But then, through confession, and as He has done with me, the Holy Spirit will pick us up, anoint us and empower us to proclaim God's *FAITHFULNESS* as I am doing today. In spite of my sin, in spite of my failure, He will perfect

me, He will establish me, and He will strengthen and settle me. Have I arrived? Most definitely not! Have I grown? Most definitely yes! Has this been accomplished in my own strength and power? No, for it is to Almighty Father God that we give all glory and dominion! The Holy Spirit's supernatural power will amaze us once we see how far the Spirit can help us to become the person that God planned for each of us to become. Think about having the Spirit's divine nature residing within us; our hope and glory!

²⁴ For WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE: BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE: FOR WHAT A MAN SEETH, WHY DOTH HE YET HOPE FOR? ²⁵ BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT. Romans 8:22-23

Yes, Satan would have me remain in *CONDEMNATION* for my actions; I had sinned. But I have confessed that sin, and I am *FORGIVEN*. Will there be repercussions and many more weeds to till and pluck from my future heart's Fruit of the Spirit garden as a result of these 'wild oats' that I have sown? Yes, and after twenty five years, there are still painfully prickly weeds that I must continue to humble myself and pull. However, I am seen as white as snow by Father God through the shed blood of Jesus. My sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west and are remembered by God no more. If He has *FORGIVEN* and forgotten, then I will *FORGIVE* and forget. I will put it behind me and press on to the high calling of my God. *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*.

¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *THIS ONE THING I DO, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, AND REACHING FORTH UNTO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE,* ¹⁴ *I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.* Philippians 3:13-14

King David fornicated with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a warrior in David's military. Upon hearing of her pregnancy with his child, David had Uriah purposely sent to fight on the front line to ensure his death. In his deepest despair, after hours of sleepless prayer and fasting, David lost the child of his and Bathsheba's coming together. David proceeded to do six things.

²⁰ Then DAVID AROSE FROM THE EARTH, AND WASHED, AND ANOINTED HIMSELF, AND CHANGED HIS APPAREL, AND CAME INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, AND WORSHIPPED: THEN HE CAME TO HIS OWN HOUSE; AND WHEN HE REQUIRED, THEY SET BREAD BEFORE HIM, AND HE DID EAT ... ²³ But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 2 Samuel 12:20, 23

David washed and anointed himself. He changed his clothes and went to the house of the Lord. There, he, like Job, after their respective calamities, worshipped God. David then returned home and ate. Maybe this is what some of us need to do. We need to confess our recent and not so recent sins of bitterness, judgment, anger, hatred, rejection, pride and possibly lack of *FORGIVENESS*. We need to wash off past sins, and remember them no more. Just as God remembers our confessed sins *NO MORE*, we must not remember our sins or the sins of others anymore. Why; because like David, it will not be possible to be anointed and to be healed; thriving in the Fruit of the Spirit, should we continue to harbor such burdens of destruction.

I am sure we have each experienced a recent shower wherein on that particular day we may have emerged exhilarated, believing ourselves to be a new person? Do we suppose that may be how David felt; even how we sense, being washed in the blood of the Lamb? Have we ever smothered ourselves after a bath, the beach or a shower with oil? Did our skin not feel revitalized? Our spirit within may have also experienced a refreshing and a renewing, as a result. There is life in the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit.

Maybe there have been other days wherein we may have not wanted to face the world and remained in our sweats for days on end? How did we reflect after we finally took a shower, applied some lotion, and maybe dressed in some articles of freshly cleaned clothing; or better yet, crawled into clean, crisp sheets? Were we not soothed and comforted? The process, most assuredly, refreshed us physically, mentally, emotionally and yes, spiritually; getting us out of our doldrums. And there is nothing better for a broken spirit then to fall on one's face before God, our Healer, and our Sustainer; feeding our spirit on the presence of our Maker. And as when any

fast comes to an end, David revitalized himself by taking physical nourishment for his body. In this process, David not only attended to his physical needs for nourishment, but focused on his emotional and spiritual needs as well; renewal .

FOR THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DEPART, AND THE HILLS BE REMOVED; BUT MY KINDNESS SHALL NOT DEPART FROM THEE, NEITHER SHALL THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED, SAITH THE LORD THAT HATH MERCY ON THEE. Isaiah 54:10

Today, many of us need to get out of the doldrums of our reality and become refreshed; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually renewed. I am not saying to give up *FAITH* on the restoration of an estranged relationship, but trust God and follow David's contemplation in *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS*.

BUT NOW HE IS DEAD, WHEREFORE SHOULD I FAST? CAN I BRING HIM BACK AGAIN? I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME. 2 Samuel 12: 23

FORGIVENESS, healing and restoration, believe it or not, run on a two way street. The Holy Spirit is more than enthusiastically eager and willing to do His part. However, we will have to be willing to do our part also. What is our part? Our part requires us to *FORGIVE* ourselves, *FORGIVE* others, be obedient and submit to the promptings of the Spirit. In addition, for survival's sake, it will be necessary for us to forget what is behind us and press on toward the mark of our high calling; God's purpose for our lives. Furthermore, it will be imperative that we renew our minds through meditating on God's Word, day and night. The Holy Spirit cannot do this part for us. The Spirit's application of the prerequisite weeding, pruning, pesticides and fertilizers is directly in proportion to our obedient submission and *FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS* within our Fruit of the Spirit gardens.

¹² WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴
WHEREFORE, MY DEARLY BELOVED, FLEE FROM IDOLATRY ... ²³
ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS ARE NOT
EXPEDIENT: ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS
EDIFY NOT. 1 Corinthians 10:12-14, 23*

In a previous chapter, we elaborated on Peter walking on the water by *FAITH*. If he took his eyes off Jesus, he sank. We too, must get out of the boat and start walking in *FAITH*. No matter the storms surrounding the boat, we need to look directly at Him. It is essential for us to get out of the boat and head straight into the arms of Jesus. Don't even consider glancing to the left or to the right; stay focused! The Holy Spirit is our only source of power that will allow us to accomplish the feats in each of our respective situations and lives. Will it be easy? There will be blustery winds and waves. Will we become overwhelmed in the mêlée and begin to sink? We will, if we take our eyes off of Jesus. Remember, this is a two way street. Trust in, lean on and have confidence in Him, and He will lift us up with His mighty power!

The choice is ours! Are we going to choose *LIFE* or *DEATH*? Are we going to speak *LIFE* or *DEATH*? Are we going to receive *LIFE* or *DEATH*? Will we choose to fulfill our part on this two way street to make that happen? Will we realize results over night? NO! Will we fall down and skin our knees through sins of omission, sins of commission and recurring sins? YES! However, we are washed in the blood of Jesus. We can confess those sins and He *WILL FORGIVE* us our sins and cleanse us from ***ALL*** unrighteousness.

This is a journey. He knows each of our arrival times; we do not. We are to press on toward the mark of our high calling; towards Jesus! *FORGIVE*, be obedient and surrender! Allow the Spirit to cultivate His Fruit of the Spirit in our respective hearts' gardens. Through *FORGIVENESS* and our obedient surrender infused with the Word of God, we will gather a *FILLED* and overflowing abundant harvest; ***FLOURISHING FORGIVENESS within the Fruit of the Spirit Garden!***

²⁸ And we know that *ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE ...* ³¹ What shall we then say to these things? *IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?* ³² He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ³³ *WHO SHALL LAY ANY THING TO THE CHARGE OF GOD'S ELECT?* It is God that justifieth. ³⁴ Who is he that *CONDEMNETH?* It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. ³⁵ *WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?* shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ... ³⁷ *NAY, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US.* ³⁸ *FOR I AM PERSUADED, THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME,* ³⁹ *NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE, SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.* Romans 8:28, 31-35, 37-39

¹ *the SPIRIT OF THE LORD GOD IS UPON ME; because THE LORD HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD TIDINGS UNTO THE MEEK; HE HATH SENT ME TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES, AND THE OPENING OF THE PRISON TO THEM THAT ARE BOUND;* ² *to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; TO COMFORT ALL THAT MOURN;* ³ *to appoint UNTO THEM THAT MOURN in Zion, TO GIVE UNTO THEM BEAUTY FOR ASHES, THE OIL OF JOY FOR MOURNING, THE GARMENT OF PRAISE FOR THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS; THAT THEY MIGHT BE CALLED TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE PLANTING OF THE LORD, THAT HE MIGHT BE GLORIFIED.* Isaiah 61:1-3

CHAPTER 12

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CHILD OF GOD?

Would you like to be *FORGIVEN* of *ALL* your sins and start over with a clean slate?

Would you like to receive this gift of Salvation and forgiveness of sins, paid for by Jesus Christ with His blood shed on the cross?

If you have not, as of yet, received this gift of Salvation, the principally most liberating gift you will ever receive in your entire life, let me tell you a little more about it.

You see, *SALVATION* as translated from the Greek means *Savior, one bringing salvation, one who delivers, one who rescues from great danger or peril, one who provides healing, protection and preserves*. This is a description of what the Gift of God is; found only in Jesus. God's grace through Christ death provides us with this gift that is both beneficent and redemptive to our personal welfare now, and for eternity.

So we have a choice, my friend. Would we like to be *FORGIVEN* of *ALL* our sins and start over with a clean slate? Would we like to receive this gift of Salvation and forgiveness of sins, paid for by Jesus Christ with His blood shed on the cross? Read the following verses and what the Spirit of God says to your heart:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Romans 3:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

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

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

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

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. Romans 10:9

If you would you like to ask Jesus to *FORGIVE* you for *ALL* of your sins? Pray with me now:

Lord, I am a sinner. I have done things my way and have made a bit of a mess of things. I want to receive your gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ. I want Your everlasting life. I confess All of my sins to You. I am truly sorry. I can no longer do this on my own. Please FORGIVE me for ALL of my sins. Please come into my life and take over. Please lead and guide me.

Thank you Lord that Your Word says, if I confess my sins, You are faithful to FORGIVE me my sins and cleanse me from All my unrighteousness. Thank You Lord, for Your mercy.

And now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and our obedience, the love of Jesus may be expressed through us to all those around us. It is that expression of His love through each of our hearts that can reach out and touch all those around us. Will we be His eyes, His ears, His hands, His arms, and His heart for those who are abandoned, alone, and estranged today; for those who may be carrying the burden of *UNFORGIVENESS*? Never forget His promises:

I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE. Hebrews 13:5

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.

Matthew 28: 20

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ALEDA J MARSHALL committed her life to Jesus Christ making Him her LORD and SAVIOR in 1976. It has been a bumpy road, but God promised to never leave her and never to forsake her. HE also promised that HE started a good work in her, and HE will complete it. She began compiling Bibles tracts in 2008 with distribution to various ministries including the local jail, and troops posted in Iraq and Afghanistan. Aleda, as empowered through prayer and the Word of God, may now be found compiling Biblical messages through the writing of inspirational books, or assisting and visiting her less able neighbors. She is a prayer warrior on various prayer chains and her heart's burden and prayer is for the hurting US military families. She has also authored the books:

NO, NEVER ALONE “I PROMISED”

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ABBA, my FATHER

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