



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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Past "CHRISTIAN LIVING" Beacon Publications

Contents

<i>Learning to Depend on Jesus</i>	2
<i>Growing In Love For Jesus</i>	4
<i>Meaning What We Pray</i>	7
<i>The Blessings of Forgiveness</i>	10
<i>The Challenge of Thankfulness</i>	13
<i>Telling Others of Jesus Christ</i>	15
<i>Growing in Godly Wisdom</i>	18
<i>Living a Godly Life?</i>	21
<i>Reality versus Delusion</i>	24
<i>New Religions</i>	27
<i>What is 'The Wrath of God'?</i>	29
<i>Hope in Hard Times</i>	31
<i>God's Warnings to Us</i>	34
<i>God's Judgments on Sin</i>	36
<i>Good Works Alone Won't Get Anyone to Heaven</i>	39
<i>How to Become a Christian</i>	42
<i>Growing Closer to God</i>	45
<i>How Do We Glorify God in Our Daily Lives?</i>	48
<i>Watch and Pray</i>	51
<i>In God's Time</i>	54
<i>Listen for the Trumpet</i>	57
<i>The Primary Sign of the Rapture</i>	60
<i>God's Promises for Your Future</i>	63

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## Learning to Depend on Jesus

Bible Radio receives an envelope of listeners' letters every few months and we send them back envelopes stuffed full of booklets and tracts up to the maximum weight allowed by the post office.

The booklets are to help them with their own spiritual growth. The salvation leaflets, once read, can become the tool for the letter writer to reach out to family and friends. This encourages them to become little missionaries in their own area, multiplying the work of the Lord.

Bible Radio isn't a welfare organisation and all requests for welfare are beyond our charter. We try to get the people with welfare requests to learn to depend on the Lord for all their needs. Until new converts to Christ learn how to grow their relationship with the Lord Jesus by dependence on Him, their spiritual life will be stunted. The following example from one of our programs is a good illustration of spiritual growth by depending on the Lord:

A missionary served for many years in a little town on the rocky coast of northern Chile. In time, the congregation grew to being about eighty adults. The missionary was concerned that the Christians in the area seemed unable to support their own national pastor. The people were very poor and the church offerings were far too low even to pay for the church's bills.

One day, the missionary brought this problem before the Lord during a special time of prayer. A few weeks later, he visited a middle-aged couple who were new converts and had begun the habit of reading their Bibles every day. "What does 'tithing' mean?" they asked.

The missionary didn't really want to tell them because they were extremely poor. They lived off the income made from selling eggs from their twenty-five hens. But the man and his wife insisted on being told what 'tithing' was. The missionary opened his Bible to 1 Corinthians Chapter 16 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, where Paul urged believers to lay aside a portion of their income to the Lord each week.

On the following Sunday, the man gave the missionary an envelope with his tithe worth 19 cents. The next Sunday a week later, the couple excitedly told the missionary some good news. On the Tuesday after they had given their tithe, there was no food for breakfast, nor any money.

They declined to take the tithe money that they had already set aside for God and decided not to eat breakfast. To their surprise when they went to the hen house there were eggs at a time of day when there were usually none.

During that day, someone came to buy chicken fertilizer from them. This meant the couple had enough money to buy some food. Soon after that, the man was given a job on a project that would last for two years.

Word got around the church and the others began experimenting with giving. The church's income began to rise dramatically and there was enough for the bills and a new pastor's income too. The missionary gave God thanks for the growth in the people's faith in God before moving on to a new area.

Those who refuse to depend on the Lord Jesus can expect to receive nothing from Him. We must not depend on our own talents and abilities BUT on Christ and His resources for our lives to work for His glory.

## Growing In Love For Jesus

In these times when Christianity is given far less respect than in times past as the means to living a healthy productive life, how can those who trust in the Lord Jesus for their salvation from sin and believe God's promises in Scripture, increase their love for Him?

To draw closer to God and extend our knowledge of Jesus and His ways, we must study our Bible without an attitude of "things were different in those days." Every book in it is there to guide and teach us. As we read, we ask these questions: What are the main truths in this chapter? What do I learn about God the Father, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit? Is there an example for me to follow, a sin to avoid or a promise to claim?

So we need to make the Scripture part of us and let its teaching rule our lives. When God's Word says not to do evil and disgusting things, He means it. There's a price to pay for going against His will.

If you don't study His Word because you are afraid it might warn against a sin you enjoy, then you are on Satan's side. Part of growing in our love for the Lord Jesus is to be aware of our great enemy, Satan. Once we are watching for the tactics he uses against Christians, we will be in a better position to counter his attacks and not fall for his temptations. When Christians don't study and understand God's Word, Satan has the advantage against us. Always pray. Prayer is a powerful resource for Christians but is often neglected. Many Christians don't set aside a reasonable amount of time to pray, or when they do pray, little thought goes into what they say. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

When we come to God in prayer our attitude must be one of worship. Disrespect for God's greatness and holiness doesn't help us to have confidence that God is a prayer-answering God who loves and cares for us. We need to give Him our total commitment, our life and future, so we can follow in His ways. There are only two ways in life: God's way and the world's ways or the broad road that leads to destruction and the narrow road that leads to heaven. (Matthew 7:13)

Many Christians think they are on the narrow way but try to maintain one foot on the broad road as well. This cannot be done and in time the world will draw such people back to itself.

Growing our relationship with Jesus means to know Him better, to love and obey Him in all things. Jesus said: "Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them, and I will love them. And I will reveal myself to each one of them." (John 14:21)

In the world there has been a deliberate attempt to dumb down educational standards. This is also happening in some churches, whereby the sermons have little spiritual food and everything is geared more to entertainment. Those who are thinkers have to look to the books of the great God-fearing saints of the past to stir up God's gifts in them. (2 Timothy 1:6)

The Christian life isn't a 'sit back and do nothing' way of life. Daily those who love the Lord Jesus will be given through the Holy Spirit His love, power and self-control to live a joy-filled, consistent Christian life. This enables us to let the people living and working around us know of God's forgiveness for their sins and how to have eternal life in Jesus Christ. Growing in love for Jesus is something we must never neglect, because if we're not going forward we'll be slipping back into our old ways of worldly behaviour. We must continually remind ourselves that our fallen nature was "crucified with Christ" and we now walk in "newness of life." (Romans 6:4-7)

## Meaning What We Pray

One of the best known teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ is called *The Lord's Prayer* and is listed in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6. His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. The simplicity of this prayer has profound sayings about God His Father in heaven. It has become such a standard part of worship services that people often have recited it without thinking what it means.

This prayer can be divided up into seven sections. The first four centre on God and putting Him in His rightful place in our priorities. So often we can rush into prayer with a long list of our needs and wants and desires. When we start our prayers to God we come respectfully and give thanks for all God has done for us first.

The last three sections cover our needs for body, soul and spirit as well as for the needs of others. Jesus gathers together all human behaviour and character and reminds us that we will always need Him. If we ask for the last three things in the prayer with the right attitude, there is no need to ask for anything else. As we depend on God minute by minute we will experience all the good things God wants to provide for us.

1. **God's Fatherly Love** - When Jesus said, "Our Father in heaven," the disciples must have been amazed at the familiarity He used. People at that time understood God to be so awesome and so very far away in the unreachable heavens. Jesus portrayed His Father as a loving and kind Father who wants a close relationship with His earthly children. To those who loved Him in return He would care for their needs.

2. **God's Holiness** - Jesus taught that God's holy name should be honoured as sacred. This is a repeat of what Moses taught in the Ten Commandments. In Exodus Chapter 20 it says: "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." We can easily forget how great and magnificent our God really is or spend time giving Him worship, thanks and praise first.

3. **God's Sovereignty** - The next words of the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come," accept God's supreme authority and power over everything in heaven and on earth. When we acknowledge God's sovereignty we welcome His rule in our lives, for we want to live in ways that please Him. God's kingdom is both in the here and now, as well as in the future to come.

4. **God's Authority** - When we pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, what are we asking for? God's perfect will is always being done in heaven. But on earth, human free will results in selfishness, greed and evil. We pray for God's will to become our will. Often we come to God in prayer bringing our own plans and desires. We want God to bless what we've already decided. We want our will to be done and our wishes to be granted. But many times God's will is different from our own and His way is always the best for us.

5. **God's Provision** - "Give us this day our daily bread." God commits Himself to provide for His children and He knows better than we do what we actually need. By praying for our needs we are not taking God for granted but acknowledging that all our life depends on Him.

6. **God's Mercy** - "Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us." We ask God to forgive our wrongs and our neglect of the good things we should have done. God is merciful and He expects us to show mercy also. If we refuse to forgive others, how can we expect God's forgiveness?



7. **God's protection** - "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The word "temptation" means more than being enticed into sin but also covers "testing." In 1 Corinthians Chapter 10 it says: "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

True prayer is an act of faith; and God honours faith. God teaches us even through our own prayers.

## The Blessings of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of the most needful and beneficial things we have on earth. Ever since our first ancestors left the Garden of Eden people have done wrong to each other as well as offend our holy God. We need God's forgiveness as much as we need to forgive those who have hurt us and seek forgiveness from those we ourselves have harmed. Peace of heart and mind is more valuable than is often realised.

God's forgiveness is conditional; He only forgives us our sins if we first forgive those who have wronged us. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44 "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven." This is genuine forgiveness.

There are, however, some cheap substitutes or barriers to real forgiveness. These include:

- Play acting for show – An adult demands that a child say "sorry" when the child has done something wrong. The child isn't really sorry but quietly waits for his time to get revenge. The positive way is to teach children to be kind to each other. Then this may produce forgiveness from the heart and not the hypocritical words only, for such play acting can carry over into adult life.
- Is forgetting real forgiveness? If we really forgive we will forget as a result. But the reverse is not true: forgetting is not forgiving – it is denial.
- When a person's mind is filled with bitterness and hatred over some past wrong done to them, they can play out the scene over and over in their mind with a sort of enjoyment, particularly if they won some points of victory from the struggle.

- In a dispute between two people they may consider God unhelpful if they prayed. It's all about getting *my* way. God has this habit of forgiving people and extending great mercy.

In Matthew 7:12 the Lord Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Peter asked: "How many times shall I forgive my brother who has sinned against me?" Jesus indicated that no one should keep the score of people's wrongs against them. We should copy Christ's example towards us and forgive other people every time that we are wronged.

In the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, the servant who owed a huge debt to his king couldn't repay it. The king didn't ask him to pay a little back over time or give him extra time to pay. The king cancelled the debt completely. This was a great act of mercy which the unforgiving servant didn't seem to appreciate for very long. After receiving so much mercy, that he didn't deserve, this servant should have willingly shown similar mercy towards his own debtor, who owed him very little by comparison. (Matthew 18:21-35)

The debt we owe God because we are sinners is like the very large debt owed by the first servant. We can't pay God back for the wrong that we have done. Nor can we ever pay it back by doing many good works or sacrifices. But God in His mercy is like the king in the parable and forgives us completely when we come humbly to Him asking for forgiveness.

How can we then not show mercy toward others?

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father of the two sons represents God. He forgave his rebellious younger son for wanting him dead, so he could spend his inheritance on pleasure. The father also had to forgive his older son, jealous because his father had forgiven his brother.

He thought his younger brother should have been made to earn his forgiveness during a probation period and if he behaved himself he could be given it then. God doesn't delay forgiveness and neither should we. (Luke 15:11-32)

One of the biggest problems we have with forgiving others, especially for dark and deep wrongs, is our memory of the wrong and the difficulty to accept that everything in the past is gone with Christ. In Hebrews 8:12, God said that when He forgives, He forgets. When we pray and ask God to take away some bad memories, He does.

Even secular counsellors recognize the value of forgiveness. Although the need to be forgiven by God is kept out of the equation, they use forgiveness as a tool to reconcile couples and families. They see that even some health problems are overcome by an act of forgiveness.

Genuine forgiving from the heart is always going to hurt our emotions but God is faithful and will help us through. The Lord Jesus suffered so much on the cross for us.

## The Challenge of Thankfulness

As the *Bible Adventures* programs progress through the Bible we have now reached the time when the king of the southern kingdom of Judah, King Jehoshaphat found himself in great trouble because a vast army from three different nations was bearing down on his kingdom.

The king went to the Temple and asked the Lord what he should do. He prayed on behalf of the people and God answered. But even before the people saw the results God had promised, they started praising and thanking God, believing that this would happen. (2 Chronicles 20) This attitude of trust in God is necessary, as the Bible says it's needed before people will see the answers to their prayers.

This lesson on the power of praise and giving thanks has been experienced by countless believers as a result of praising God from their hearts. It's as if God is waiting for us to praise Him before He begins to act. To praise God at the very moment we're experiencing distress, fear, sorrow and disappointment is to demonstrate true faith in God's power and goodness that we're yet to receive. And God always honours true faith. King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah proved this to be true, and so can we.

Is thanksgiving always possible? In 1st Thessalonians, Chapter 5, it says: "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." The Lord God, who is the author of all our blessings, appreciates, desires and even seeks, our praise and thanksgiving. In Psalm 50, it says: "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God." In Psalm 145, the Psalmist also says: "I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever. I will praise you every day ... Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness."

We can thank God in all things through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit; for we can trust that the Lord knows what is best for us, and He is ordering the course of our lives and bringing their details to pass, both in the time and manner that He desires. God Almighty has never made a mistake and what He allows to come into the lives of His children is for their eternal good and the glory of God. In Hebrews, Chapter 12, it says: “God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in His holiness.”

Among those of God’s people living a lifestyle of pleasing Him by keeping their faith strong in the Lord Jesus Christ, each day can be a continual prayer of thanksgiving to God. Such a lifestyle includes doing to others what they should do to you, even when their actions are unworthy of it. This is shown by caring for the good of others, joyfulness, a profound peace within, patience, doing what is right even if it hurts, being faithful to the Lord, and treating others (including and especially your family) in a kindly manner at all times. Say something pleasant to others every time you get a chance. All this is character development and preparing you for service for the Lord wherever He places you. It also builds up others and encourages them to draw close to God themselves.

When we hear ourselves complaining about various things going on in our lives, we need to stop and ask for God’s perfect pathway through our problems. Instead of focusing on what we don’t have, we have a wonderful opportunity to thank God for all the blessings He’s provided for us and will in the coming days! If you’ve asked the Lord Jesus to be your Saviour and Lord, your sins are now fully wiped away and your souls made new in the image of Christ; start by thanking God for your most precious salvation!

At the present time we hear news reports of wars and rumours of wars. Those of us sure we’re going to heaven come what may, know with certainty that our God is sovereign and He has everything in control. Prayers of thankfulness and praise to God go hand-in-hand together.

## Telling Others of Jesus Christ

Many Christians think that telling others about the Lord Jesus Christ is a specialist gift given to only a few followers of the Lord. But in Matthew 28:19 Jesus said that every Christian is to “go and make disciples of all the nations.” This shows that we all should never grow weary of sharing Christ with those we come into contact with.

Christianity worldwide is under assault from two different forces: secular humanism (there is no god or accountability, so we can do whatever we feel like) and from the Islamic religion (which seeks to destroy all other religions by force). A European leader said this year that Christianity is Europe’s only hope of survival.

So how can we go about spreading the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to those we know or strangers we meet in this post-Christian era? Before you cringe and turn off, there are some methods that even shy people can use under the direction of the Holy Spirit to sow seeds of truth about Jesus.

Some people deny there is a God. A gentle reply about looking at a house proves that there was a builder and looking at the nature of our complex world proves there had to be a Creator. If the person doesn’t change their thinking on this, it’s better to hand them a tract if they will accept it and move on. Never get into an argument as that’s not God-honouring. Tracts like *Bridge to Life* can help the believer show and explain about every person’s need for a Saviour from sin. Anyone unfamiliar with the Bible is handed a simple understanding of why they need Jesus’ gift of salvation. The illustrations in this tract make it easy for them to know their position spiritually before God.

Another good one is called *Two Ways to Live*. This shows non-Christians the choice each person has to face: Will I live my life my own way with myself in charge or will I step down and allow Jesus to rule my life? Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual laws which govern a person's relationship with God.

God's spiritual laws are:

- (1) God loves each person and created them to know Him personally.
- (2) Humans are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.
- (3) Jesus Christ is God's only provision for destroying human sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love.
- (4) We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; then we can know God personally and experience His love.

Depending on how much a non-believer knows about the Bible, another way is to speak about Romans Chapter 10. Some people try to keep the Old Testament law but Jesus has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. "As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God." (Romans 10:4)

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:9-13 - "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect.

They have the same Lord who gives generously to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." In your telling non-believers about the Lord Jesus try first to memorise the above Scriptures to help them understand God's ways.



Some people who regularly attend church are not true believers in the Lord Jesus. In a one-on-one conversation the discussion can gently be steered towards: Why would God allow someone who hasn't taken any steps to get to know Him as personal Saviour from their sin, into His wonderful home called Heaven? It is the true believer's responsibility to tell about Jesus' saving power but leave it to the Holy Spirit to convict the person of his/her sin. By regular prayer for that person the Lord may bring conviction at a later time. If there is no positive response at all, it's not the true believer's place to feel guilt over a negative outcome. If the Holy Spirit is indwelling and guiding each step we take, a prayer at the beginning of each day to share Jesus with others will bring opportunities which should be seized upon and not avoided.

The **Parable of the Sower** in Luke 8 divides those hearing the Gospel message into four categories: Not everyone who hears about Jesus and His saving love will give a positive response. Some will be eager at first but soon fall away or allow the importance of faith in Jesus to be choked out by their many other interests. Does that mean that we should be discouraged, disheartened and give up? Not at all! Keep praying for a good harvest for His kingdom. Ask yourself if you are helping with the harvest for the Lord or are you like the man who hid his talent in the ground, producing nothing at all? 2nd John 1:8b says: "Be diligent so that you receive your full reward."

## Growing in Godly Wisdom

What is wisdom and where's the best place to find it? Wisdom is more than academic knowledge. Knowledge is the capacity to understand and retain what we have been taught; wisdom is the ability to put that knowledge into best practice. Knowledge by itself doesn't stop many educated people from making a mess of their lives.

So many trained people doubt God's existence. Whether a person accepts God is real or not does not lessen the fact that God has always existed and takes an active approach in the affairs of this world. He doesn't need our stamp of approval. He is the Creator and we are the created! Those same doubting people find it easy to believe in our country's famous leaders of the past, even though they haven't had any contact with them. But they refuse to believe in the existence of the Person who died so that they could live – Jesus Christ. This is foolishness, the opposite of wisdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the 'power of God and the wisdom of God.' (1 Cor.1:24) Highest wisdom comes from Him but rather than just knowing the principles of wisdom, having a relationship with Him is far wiser. This comes from believing His words in His book, The Bible. King Solomon wrote many proverbs to teach his people how to live and act wisely in every different situation.

He said in Proverbs 3:5 – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and He will show you the right way. Simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong.”* If we study the book of Proverbs it will make us more effective in our living day by day.

**Godly Wisdom** teaches integrity. God Himself cannot tell lies and no matter what the circumstances He never expects His people to tell lies either. Situation ethics promote settings where a person must sin because that is what ought to be done. The Christian view is that God is sovereign and He will prepare a way out for His people. By the Holy Spirit's power a believer is given the right words to say at the right moment. Sadly, a lack of integrity hinders the progress of the Gospel.

**Godly Wisdom** promotes personal purity. One of the themes of Proverbs is to avoid the temptation of wrongful sexual relationships. Stay well away from promiscuous people and be faithful to your marriage vows. The price of unfaithfulness is trouble and unless repented of, will cost the offenders a place in heaven. In Revelation 21:8 God says that those who win the victory will be the children of God. "But cowards, traitors, perverts, murderers, the immoral, those who practise magic, those who worship idols and all liars" will be sent to the lake burning with fire. That is the second death from which there is no return.

**Godly Wisdom** recommends generosity. Honour God by making Him an offering of the best you can give from your time, talents and income. Then be generous to the poor and needy, for when you give to the poor, it is like lending to the Lord, and the Lord will pay you back. (Prov.19:17)

**Godly Wisdom** encourages diligence. Be a diligent worker as those who are lazy don't prosper. Diligence or a good work ethic comes through patient perseverance. This springs from the hope that at the end of our lives the task given to us by the Lord Jesus has been achieved. (Proverbs 10:4)

**Godly Wisdom** grows godly character. When the Lord corrects you pay close attention because, just like parents, the Lord corrects those He loves. We must be careful how we think as our lives are shaped by our thoughts. Never say anything that isn't true. The Lord sees everything we do, so be self-controlled. Avoid places where evil people go and do not follow the example of the wicked.

**Godly Wisdom** draws us close to God, teaching us to trust Him at all times and in all situations. Past difficulties of trusting on a human level can hinder our ability to trust on a spiritual level. To overcome this we need to be willing to forgive those who deprived us, hurt us or betrayed us in the past. To do this, focus on how much we've been forgiven by God and the love Jesus has for us.

**Godly Wisdom** is more valuable than riches. The wisest advice for living is Proverbs 23:14 – *“Don't envy sinful people but let reverence for the Lord be the concern of your life.”* After all, no one fools God. A person reaps the rewards of what they sow, for God keeps every promise He makes.

As we learn the problems and mistakes of the early church, may we avoid the wrongdoing, grief and ultimately the punishments from God for not following His wisdom or obeying His Son.

## Living a Godly Life?

Is it possible for every committed Christian to live a consistent godly life? Yes, the call to be different from the world and the world's ways is expected by God of all who follow Jesus Christ. God said: "Be holy because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)

God is in the process of preparing us for heaven, to live with Him for all eternity. He wants us to be like Him, so He desires that we grow in both holiness and godliness while we're still on this earth. One day we will see God face to face, and with that day in view the Apostle Peter tells us to live holy and godly lives now. (2 Peter 3:11)

Christians are not to slip back into their old pre-salvation ways of living to satisfy their own sinful desires. (1st Peter 1:14) But while still living here on earth no person is perfect and daily needs to express to Him sorrow for wrong things done.

The New Testament word for godliness, in its original meaning, conveys the idea of a personal attitude toward God that results in thoughts, words and deeds that are pleasing to Him. Godliness is more than Christian character: It grows from devotion to God.

In these modern times much is said about God's love but not so much about respect and reverence for Him and His holy book. While we are grateful for His love and mercy, we must never lose sight of His majesty and His role of being the all-knowing judge of everybody (Romans 14:12), as these attitudes control our behaviour.

Holiness is not developed in isolation from other people. We live in the world but we don't live by the world's standards in a sinful society and corrupt culture. We have been separated for God and live by the laws of His kingdom in Christlikeness.

God's relationship with us in Christ must be personal. Each person has to choose Christ or reject Him as Saviour and Lord for ever. Parents cannot make a decision for Christ on behalf of their children and children cannot claim Christ for their parents. Each person must admit their own sinfulness, believe that Christ paid their sin debt and ask Him in prayer for forgiveness and newness of life. From then on the Christian lives a life that is set apart, reserved to give glory to God. It is a life of discipline, focus, and attention to matters of righteous living.

Those who live according to their sinful desires have their minds set on what their human nature wants, as their thoughts are hostile to God and His Holy Spirit. Some people call themselves a Christian but looking at their life shows that they are living just the same as their non-believing friends and neighbours. By their many good deeds they think that they'll make it into heaven. But no Christian service can have any value to God if it's done by an ungodly person.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) The Lord Jesus is the only way – there is no other.

No new believer in Christ just drifts into holiness. It has to be worked at and given priority over other activities. It is both the privilege and duty of every Christian to pursue godliness by privately spending unhurried time reading God's Word at least four times a week and talking to Him in prayer every day.

Spiritual battles against temptations are nearly always won in the mind. What we sow in our minds we reap in our actions. The Apostle Paul taught that it is by the renewing of our minds that our character and behaviour are transformed. (Romans 12:2)

The truly godly person never forgets that he/she was at one time an object of God's holy and just anger. They never forget that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 John 4:10) Their own sins which they should have paid for by death, were cancelled completely and totally placed upon the holy Son of God. And in this view of Calvary, their faith sees the overwhelming love of God.

There is a price to be paid for living a godly life following Jesus: Suffering comes from many trials and problems as well as persecution from people outside of Christ. When we become holy like Him, joy and peace follow. Jesus taught (Matthew 5:12): "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven."

## Reality versus Delusion

Our society is changing quickly through technology driven devices loaded with fantasy games based on the occult and we need to understand what we should be doing. 2nd Timothy 3 says: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...”

Has our society declined already to this level of self-absorption? A recently published piece spoke about a short white American man asking some university students about their thoughts when he said: “If I told you I was 7 feet tall, what would you say?” One student replied, “If you truly believed you’re 7 feet, I don’t think it’s harmful. I think it’s fine if you believe that. It doesn’t matter to me if you think you’re taller than you are. I wouldn’t tell you you’re wrong.” And another student said, “I feel like that’s not my place as another human to say someone is wrong or to draw lines or boundaries.”

This demonstrates that debates over issues like gender identity are really a symptom that society has abandoned the importance of kind truth-telling, in favour of making others feel good about believing whatever they want their dreams to be.

The 150kg person who looks like a man, walks and talks like a man but claims that he’s a female is what we’d describe as “divorced from reality.” He can’t change the billions of cells in his body by hormone drugs to become a female. He is what he was born with, a body full of male cells and that’s never going to change. He needs the help of a trained counsellor. Studies have shown that the numbers of children expressing their desire to be the opposite of their birth sex, have radically reduced when they are not encouraged to impersonate the opposite sex.



If significant numbers of society live in their own fantasy world and avoid the realities of life as much as possible, then the cause of Satan is advanced, bringing delusions that cause chaos.

At the present time, many nations think they can get out of debt by making more debt. Truth-telling is indispensable to a healthy society and Christ's gift of forgiveness and His teachings help us face reality.

Christians defending the truth of Christianity need to understand the difference between objective and subjective truth. Objective truth is true for all people, regardless of our opinions - ("It's sunny outside"). On the other hand, subjective truth can be true for some but not others - ("Sunshine is important"). Christians must focus on this distinction because many people today claim that nothing is objectively true.

Christianity assumes objective truth exists: Jesus is the one and only way to heaven for everyone and it's not up to individuals to find whatever path to God they want. In an increasingly secular society, fewer and fewer people feel it's acceptable for Christians to share their faith in Jesus Christ.

But genuine Christian love desires the best for every person, even when that means sharing objective truths they may not want to hear. Is Christianity true? Of course!

What if there really are eternal consequences for whether or not a person accepts Jesus as their Saviour? Should Christians keep silent about this objective truth for all? Of course not! We need to present the Gospel to anyone who will listen. But if Christians are content to stay silent and be unwilling to take the risk of speaking up for Jesus in case of any hostility they might encounter, then Christians have completely abandoned love driven truth-telling and allowed it to be replaced by the confusion of pretence and telling lies.

The Old Testament gives ample evidence that when God withdraws His favour from a nation because of their sin, unsolvable problems become the norm. Our only hope today is in God's mercy as we pray and repent of our lack of trust in the Lord Jesus. As Proverbs Chapter 11, verse 30 says: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Be Guided by God's Truth

## New Religions

**Political Correctness (PC):** This is now a wide-sweeping religion with no moral foundation on God's Word that is being championed by mainstream media and Government-enforced influences. PC forces people through peer pressure to use certain words and behaviour so as to not cause any possible personal offence to anyone else, no matter the circumstances. Thus, handicapped or disabled people can only be called 'challenged' people.

In practice, PC can easily distort the truth. Young people who are in trouble with the law, instead of being called 'juvenile delinquents' are now referred to as 'children at risk', with little or no responsibility assigned to the young person's choice to rebel and behave lawlessly.

PC can undermine God's standards and values in a society as all beliefs and behaviours must be considered equal until a harmful breach can be considered worthy of subjective prosecution. When fully upheld, PC is the enemy of freedom of speech, democratic debate and honest communication, as well as a true love for others out of respect and diversity. In Ephesians 3:9a, the Apostle Paul said: 'Do not lie to one another.'

**The Religion of Equality:** This is a system that promises freedom yet in reality, produces enslavement. Equality doesn't work because liberty can't exist without a moral foundation. The media has been very active in trying to make homosexuality an 'equality' issue so that gay marriage becomes a constitutional right.

The entire concept of gay marriage is based on a lie that people can do what they please before God and society. It also distorts the sacred union that God intended between a man and woman for producing godly children. It is really an insult to argue that homosexual relationships are comparable with man/woman marriages or should be considered the same. Yet if Christians wish to speak up against this behaviour using God's rejection of it in the Bible, they can be publicly condemned by the media and even prosecuted by PC laws. The Bible says that Christians will always be open for condemnation for what they believe, as it opposes the thinking of the world. Thus anyone who holds to the teachings of the Holy Bible is an enemy of the Religion of Equality. Yet despite temporal suffering in this lifetime, Christians who stand true to God's teachings for God's glory (and not their own) will be rewarded when in heaven.

**The Religion of Modernism:** This can be defined as throwing out the spiritual values of the past to promote and uphold a trendy and modern world view that church worship must be congregational entertainment. Modernism denies the absolute truths shown in the Bible, such as how to come into God's presence with reverence, holiness and awe. Modernism often focuses on a self-orientation rather than holding high the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The church was never supposed to turn out a batch of superstars, either as preachers, musicians or singers, to replace God's challenging call to daily deny one's own selfish ambition to enable a humble walk with our Lord. Unless modernism works are of God and for His purpose and glory alone, God will never share His glory with these types of practices. False doctrine comes in many different guises. Let us always watch out that no one deceives us. Read the Bible daily.

## What is ‘The Wrath of God’?

People use ‘wrath’ or anger in their own lives to express displeasure at other people, their circumstances and even at God. But God’s wrath or intense anger is different – His anger is always directed towards sin.

God couldn’t be a God of love if He didn’t deal with the human separation from Himself caused by human sin. God loves justice and righteousness and He is always just in His judgments. Take for example the matter of a murderer wilfully killing another person. Is the killer to be judged for his wrongdoing? Of course, and even if he escapes punishment in this life, there will be no escape in the next life when God, knowing all, is judge. Justice is part of God’s character or He wouldn’t be a God of love. Only those who are aware of God’s wrath are amazed by His mercy towards undeserving people.

There are two phrases we need to understand: The day of redemption and the day of the Lord. The day of redemption is the blessed hope believers in the Lord Jesus wait expectantly for. We call this the Rapture or “catching away” when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout (1 Thess.4:16-17). He will take up to Himself in heaven all those who have entrusted their lives to Him because they believe the wrath of God against their sin was paid for by Christ on the cross of Calvary.

When the Lord Jesus’ life was restored to Him three days after His crucifixion, He ascended back to His Father in heaven 40 days later. Ten days later, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given from heaven to all His believers. The work of the Holy Spirit has also restrained evil in this world. (2 Thess. 2:7) But when the Lord Jesus takes His beloved believers out of this world, the Holy Spirit is expected to have an Old Testament role again. Then evil in many forms will prosper on earth as never seen before. (Matt. 24:21) This is called the Day of the Lord or the Tribulation period.

During those seven years of unspeakable horror there will be wars, earthquakes, famine and widespread deadly sicknesses, all with great loss of life. (Luke 21:11) To make matters worse, the world will be ruled by one man known as the Antichrist. He will prevent people from buying or selling food unless they have his identifying mark. (Rev. 13:17)

As we are seeing the grim prophecies to take place during “the day of the Lord” coming together on the world stage, we can know confidently that “the day of redemption” is even closer. Christ told us “when these things begin to come to pass,” we are to “look up and lift up your heads,” for the day of our redemption is almost here. (Ephesians 4:30, Luke 21:28). Believers would not be excited to see “the day of the Lord” (punishment and judgment) approaching, unless they were confident “the day of redemption” (rapture) would come first and they would not be present here on the earth when “the day of the Lord” judgments were taking place.

In the last Bible book, Revelation, chapters 6 to 18, God’s anger is directed against the sinfulness of the people remaining on the earth after the believers in Jesus have disappeared. All such nonbelievers left behind will still have their sins recorded in God’s books in heaven. Then they may realise that there is such a separate destination called hell for all those who rejected the words of Jesus.

During those devastating years some people will turn to God but are killed by the Antichrist (Rev.13:7). During that time the surviving Israelis will all be saved. (Romans 11:26)

As the day of our redemption draws near, each of us should be asking ourselves: Are we watching for the Lord’s return, and will we be ready? Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset but eternity to the godless is a night to which there is no sunrise. (Thomas Watson) Eternal separation from God is that stark! God’s wrath is to be feared because God promises eternal punishment apart from Christ (Matthew 25:46). Choose Christ as your Redeemer and Master rather than live life pleasing self alone.

## Hope in Hard Times

This year has seen people around the world have a major upheaval of their lifestyle, unexpected health concerns, loss of income with debts piling up and fears about future employment. Many wonder how they are going to cope in such hard times. Those facing lockdown in their homes for weeks on end have come to despair if things will ever get back to normal, even if the new normal is not the same as before.

Where can we find hope in those times of life when we go through major difficulties? When we open our Bible we discover many of the heroes of the faith went through times of trouble and doubt. They doubted what God had told them about their own future. In Psalm 6 King David was in complete despair and anguish about some problem that the psalm doesn't reveal. Yet by the end of this short psalm he has changed even though his circumstances hadn't. He is confident that the Lord has heard his prayer and will answer him.

Often people travel through life giving little thought about our Creator God and spiritual things. Each person has a never dying soul which can easily be neglected in the pursuit of worldly possessions and achievements. But when hard times come, many will go searching for Him and even if they've never read the Bible before, they get one and start reading it. They want to know why they are suffering so much and what God's eternal purposes for them will be.

When calamity comes, God can bring good out of bad situations as we pray and commit ourselves to doing what He wants. But first we need to get ourselves into a correct relationship with Him by trusting in the Lord Jesus' death to cancel all our past sins. Jesus will gladly forgive when sincerely asked. Romans 10:9 says: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." He will then send His Holy Spirit to live in our lives every hour of the day and night.

How should we spend our time going forward? Focus your mind on prayer and understanding what the Bible says, so that you may be wise in your words and actions. Fear and confusion don't come from the Lord. Neither does false doctrine, so be watching for it. Share the light of Christ with those who are fearful and confused about the future. Encourage them to trust in the Lord Jesus completely in every situation.

No matter how dark the world seems to become, remember Jesus Christ said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) Hebrews 13:5 says: "For God has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' Claim these promises as your own. While we are not promised an easy life, we are told that Christ will be there with us when we believe in Him. The Lord Jesus warned us about times of persecution and suffering for our belief in Him before His return. He won't burden us with more than we can cope with. Even our hard times can be used to bring praise to God and teach us important lessons God wants us to learn.

In the book of Revelation Chapters 6-19 there are predictions of very hard times ahead. Jesus said in Luke Chapter 21 that there would be wars, rumours of war, great earthquakes, famine and plagues in many lands. He said not to be terrified when you see these things.



“Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:36) Jesus will call up to Himself all those owned by Him before the tribulation suffering starts.

We will share in Jesus’ ultimate victory over sin and death and forever reign with Him. (Romans 8:17) What a great promise to give us hope in hard times. Ephesians 6:18 tells us, “Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.” Even when things are bad, God is still good and we can praise Him for that. As one preacher said: “Without Christ there is no hope.”

## God's Warnings to Us

In many places in the Old Testament God gave the Children of Israel warnings about their worship of idols, their disobedience of His laws, their unbelief that He would keep His promises to them and do miracles for them.

God warned them that He would send punishments upon them if they didn't turn themselves back to Him. His warnings were often ignored because they were happy with their evil ways and they thought that as God's chosen people, He wouldn't really send judgments on them. But He did!

After 56 generations had passed from Adam, the time was right for God to send His sinless Son, the Lord Jesus, to come to earth to be the one all-sufficient sacrifice for human sins. After Jesus had six illegal trials He died on a cruel Roman cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb but arose again after three days and nights. Jesus reconciled and still does reconcile sorrowful sinners from all nations back to God as they join together in His godly church. As the Holy Spirit guided the new church groups in many cities around the region, God no longer desired all worship to Him be made in Jerusalem. The wickedness of the temple rulers so grieved God that He allowed the Temple to be destroyed completely in 70AD. The Jewish people who survived the Roman slaughter at that time were exiled to the four corners of the world.

After most of 2,000 years God has returned the Israelite people back to their homeland as He promised. This is the time in history for events listed in chapters 6 to 19 of the last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, to begin happening. This book is the only book of the Bible with a promise of blessing for those who read it. It has many warnings from God for people who want to continue living their lives for self, without giving Him a single thought or giving thanks for all He does for the people of the world.

Some Christians think that this worldwide virus is a warning from God to be prepared for bad times coming. We need to get our hearts and minds in tune with Him, search the Scriptures and tell everyone that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from our human sins given by God to us. Of course, there will be some who scoff at us and disbelieve there is any life after death but some will humbly ask Jesus for His forgiveness from their sins.

When this virus is overcome, the old patterns of the past life we all knew only in recent years will be gone. Lockdowns have irreversibly changed many aspects of our lifestyles worldwide and greatly advanced the lead up to a One-World-Government.

Jesus predicted in Matthew 24 that at the end of the age Christians and Jews would be persecuted throughout the world. And the virus has certainly brought about the shutdown of churches and even small prayer groups in homes.

But our God is a merciful God; He will remove His faithful people before the great sudden destruction comes on an unsuspecting world. In 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Paul says: "For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever."

Those who understand their need for a Saviour and call on the name of the Lord, placing their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, before He comes, will not go through the terrible time the world will soon suffer. By choosing Jesus, you can know with certainty that you will not only be saved from Hell, but also from the time of great trouble the world will soon experience.

Those still alive and unwilling to put their faith in Jesus before He comes to rescue His own, will go through the worst time in history the world will ever know, and will be subject to, or killed by, Antichrist. Around 6 billion people will be killed in those 7 years of Tribulation. Many people put off making a commitment to follow Jesus until it's too late.

**Where will you spend eternity?**

## God's Judgments on Sin

Ever since the day that God the Creator of the world sent the first people Adam and Eve out of His magnificent garden for disobeying Him, all their descendants have had a sin problem which they need to address.

God is holy and cannot tolerate sin in His presence. People want to remember Him as a God of love and mercy but He is also a God of justice. Nine generations from Adam things had become so bad on earth that God had to punish the people with a worldwide flood. Only Noah and his family were saved.

Sin against God is rebellion against Him of any kind or believing that the human way is better than God's. God gave the Israelites **ten commandments** to follow. (Exodus 20) These included being faithful to only Him as God, not to make idols of things they saw, not to steal or tell lies to harm someone else, to set aside one day each week to worship Him, to honour their parents and not to murder anyone. They were to be faithful to their wives and not to envy what belonged to others.

When the Israelites settled in the land God had promised them, they soon turned away from God and made idols for themselves. God punished them by allowing the neighbouring nations to conquer them and take away their possessions. God sent them prophets to tell them what was going to happen in the future so that when they saw the predictions take place they would trust God and His promises to them. After 4,000 years God sent His sinless Son Jesus Christ to be the Saviour from sin for all those who would trust Jesus to be their Redeemer.

Although Jesus did many kind things for suffering people, He denounced the ruling religious leaders of the day as wicked because they stole from poor people and led them astray from God. They didn't like having their money-making schemes exposed, so they plotted to kill Jesus.

Jesus warned His disciples that He would die but after three days He would rise from the grave. His distressed disciples didn't understand this was part of God's plan to judge sin. After several illegal trials of Jesus during the night, when daylight came, Jesus was taken before the Roman governor because only he could sign a death warrant for a criminal. And this he did, even though he knew it was out of envy that the chief priests wanted to see Jesus destroyed.

Jesus died for the sins of the world on a cruel Roman cross outside Jerusalem and rose from the grave three days and three nights later. Where were Jesus' disciples? They were hiding behind locked doors for fear that the soldiers would be looking for them next. Jesus spent the following 40 days with them before ascending back to heaven. Two angels appeared and told the crowd of 500 people that Jesus would return just as He had left.

Jesus' next visit to earth will be in the clouds calling all His faithful followers up to Himself so they can go straight to heaven. (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:9; 1 Corinthians 15:51; Revelation 3:10) Jesus promised to protect His people from all the severe punishments poured out for sin on the earth during the 7 years of Tribulation. This starts when the world communist leader known as the Antichrist confirms an agreement with the Israelites. (Read Revelation Chs. 6-18)

When will Jesus come to physically save believers in Him? No one knows but we are told to watch and be ready at all times. (Matthew 24:42) Following the Tribulation period Jesus will return to earth on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) to commence His 1000-year reign from Jerusalem.

Reader, if you want to go to heaven, you must be born again (John 3:3). God loves you, and if you have not already done so, sincerely admit that you are a sinner; believe that Jesus is the sinless Son of God who died to save you from eternal suffering in hell. Ask Him to forgive your sins, cleanse you, come into your life and be your Saviour. Only those who ask Him to forgive their sins can experience a recreation of their character and personality by God's Holy Spirit living in them. Don't put this off!

There is a Judgment Day coming when every person has to give an account of what they did while living on the earth. (2 Cor.5:10)

# Good Works Alone Won't Get Anyone to Heaven

When God created the world and everything in it, He gave the first couple, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden to care for and eat the fruit of the trees there. The only rule placed on them was that they shouldn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

After a while they did eat some forbidden fruit. That one act of disobedience brought a barrier between God and the couple which the couple couldn't overcome to restore the relationship. With their sin, all people after them were born physically as sinners too.

But God had a plan. After 4,000 years of people living on earth, God sent His sinless and only son, Jesus to be the sacrifice under God's law to make a way back to a relationship with God for all people asking for it. God's way for us to see Heaven is that innocent blood had to be shed to have our sins forgiven. The only payment God will accept for all a sinner's wrongdoing is the sacrificial death of God's own son, Jesus. No one can achieve Heaven for what they have done, but for what Jesus has done for them. Trusting in Jesus is the only way to get to Heaven.

It is only through God's grace (undeserved kindness) that a person can be saved and go to heaven, so no one can boast about it. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done here on earth. How can a person then be saved? By acknowledging that Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Jesus said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* John 14:6

Each person as an individual has to chose to follow Jesus by faith, asking Him to be their Saviour and forgive all their sins. The Lord Jesus does not turn away any sincere request.

He comes to live in that person by His Holy Spirit. This is spiritual birth and then the person can do the good things He has planned for them to do. Spiritual growth comes with daily living for the Lord Jesus, spending time talking to Him in prayer and thinking about what the Bible reading for the day means.

This will bring about behavioural changes: Great love and respect for God, rejection of past idols, covetousness and envy, sexual purity in both thought and deed, rest for our bodies one day each week to worship our Creator God, no stealing or telling lies, and not killing other people. We ask Him for forgiveness as soon as we realize that we have sinned in some way.

Although good works alone will not get anyone into heaven, a Christian is expected to do good works. We are to do them, not to earn Heaven, but to be a good Christian example of kindness and caring for the needs of others. We should be a blessing to people because we love the Saviour and want to be obedient to His commandments. When we shine our Christian “light” others may see God’s goodness and will also turn to Him.

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 5:16*

When Christians see Jesus at the Bema seat of judgment in heaven, there will be rewards for good things we’ve done for Jesus while on earth. However, it will depend on our motives for doing those good deeds if we are rewarded or not. If we do something to feel good ourselves or for the praise of other people, Jesus won’t get the glory (praise).

Each person’s good works will be tried by fire to see what type it was. If the good works are burned up, there will be no rewards for that person. (1 Corinthians 3:15)



Some people claiming to be Christians at the judgment will declare that they did many good works in Jesus' name. But Jesus will tell them that He never knew them or authorized their good works. He said: "Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter." (Matthew 7:21)

Those trusting in Jesus to run their race of life do so to be approved at the judgment and hear Jesus say: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

**TRUST IN JESUS ALWAYS**

## How to Become a Christian

It has been reported that later this year (2022) there will be a worldwide critical shortage of food. A combination of drought, floods and a lack of fertilizer will increase the price of food beyond what many people can afford to pay for it.

This is what the Bible speaks about in the book of Revelation 6:5-6. But before this, the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven will open the seals of the scroll which give the order of Antichrist revealed, followed by wars before famine and death. Before the Antichrist can appear on the world stage to rule and reign as a dictator, the Lord Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life will call up to Himself all those who belong to the eternal family of God the Father. (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:9)

If you have friends and relatives who aren't trusting their future to the Lord Jesus, here's a way of helping them realise they have a choice to make: If they want to go to heaven, they must be born again spiritually. (John 3:3) God loves them but they must admit that they were born physically as a sinner, believe that Jesus is the virgin-born, sinless Son of God who died for the sins of the world, was buried, and raised from the dead. Each person must sincerely ask Jesus to forgive their sins, cleanse them, come into their heart and be their Saviour.

Once they've done this, they need to tell someone what they have done because this is only the beginning of a new life and way of living. They need to start reading their Bible and praying to God about everything each day and attending a church where the Bible is preached. Faith in Jesus conquers fear but we must choose one or the other. We can't have both and there are times when we want to choose protection for our bodies rather than step out in faith with God.

Here are the Bible references:

**A – ADMIT (Acknowledge)** Admit honestly to God that you have sinned and disobeyed Him.

Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Isaiah 53:6 – “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

**B – BELIEVE (Trust)** Believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again. His blood was shed to pay for your sins.

I Corinthians 15:3-4 – “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

**C – CHOOSE (CONFESS)** Choose to trust Jesus alone for the forgiveness of your sins.

Romans 10:13 – “for ‘Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

Acts 3:19 – “Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. (NLT)

Romans 10:9-10 “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

We can count on Him to keep His promises. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” - I John 1:9

It is impossible to please God without faith. “Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” — Hebrews 11:6

Our faith grows stronger through testing. If you have a real faith in God, your faith will grow stronger through adversity and difficulty, not weaker.

What God did in the lives of people years ago, He can still do in the lives of people today. God wants to work in your life, your home and in your sphere of influence. So we need to apply faith.

## Growing Closer to God

Christians often believe that what they do for God is more important than the strength of their relationship with God. They remember that in 1st Corinthians 3:13 their work for the Lord will be tested by fire on Judgment Day.

But God is holy, eternal, all powerful and totally self-sufficient. He doesn't need any created being to supply anything for Him or He wouldn't be God. However, we and all creation do need Him to sustain us. Amazingly, He greatly loves us and in His goodness wants us to live with Him forever.

To allow sinful people into heaven the price of those sins had to be paid for. The Lord Jesus, God's dearly loved Son, some two thousand years ago gave His very life to pay for our sin and prove His deep love for us. Salvation is a gift, freely given for the asking when a person believes with all their heart that Jesus died as their sin bearer (He had no sin of His own). He arose from the grave three days later as He had predicted.

Believers in Christ are made new by the presence of God's Holy Spirit in their lives as He leads them away from the old life of sinful practices and independent decision making. A daily attitude of repentance enables the believer to access God's kindness and favour in their lives. Regularly reading the Bible, talking to God in prayer and meeting with other believers on a regular basis helps spiritual growth. But there can be no substitute for personal time spend alone with God.

The journey of spiritual growth moves forward in stages. In the beginning we can see ourselves as clay in the potter's hands but as we move along we may see ourselves as sheep and Jesus as our shepherd. As we move forward, we are His servants and He is our Master. Some believers never get beyond that stage. But as we grow in our trust in Him, we are described as God's children. The next level upwards is where God calls us His friends.

At the top of all the stages is a level of intimacy which at first we find hard to take in – we are His dearly loved. God longs for a relationship where His love for us is returned by our love for Him. Remember the hymn: “Jesus, lover of my soul.” To get to this level we can’t sit idly by and wait for God to do this for us. The Lord Jesus taught in the Beatitudes (Matthew’s Gospel Chapter 5) how we should grow in living life for Him.

The first one known as “poor in spirit” can be expressed like this: “O how close to God are those humble-minded people who put their whole trust in God and who honour and serve God as the King of their lives.” Humble-minded people treat other people respectfully and appreciate each day as a gift of life from God.

The second one “those who mourn” can be given as: “Oh, how near to the heart of God are those who are hurting.” In times of great grief God’s greatest promise to always be with us is a comfort. The word “mourn” can also indicate sorrow over our sins and the troubles, injustices and conflicts of the world. Those who care deeply will be given God’s strength to come through their trials with a deeper understanding of life.

Meekness doesn’t mean weakness but obedience to God, serving Him and doing God’s will. Moses realized how much he needed God and he gave himself completely to God. We all need to strive for personal goodness.

Christians are to show other people the same kind of mercy that God shows to us – forgiveness, generosity and a sympathetic understanding of their circumstances. This includes working for peaceful relationships. Of course those who live by these principles can expect opposition and persecution for doing right but God’s promise is that they will be with Him in heaven.

Are you a genuine Christian? Just getting people to pray the sinner's prayer to God is not enough to become a Christian. The person must be convinced that God has the key to their problems and be convicted that their old ways of living are leading them onto eternal death. This understanding comes from a thorough study of the Scriptures.

Believers in Christ need to earnestly seek after a closer relationship with the Lord, thus knowing Him more deeply for His love and fellowship, so we can obediently give His love to help others.

# How Do We Glorify God in Our Daily Lives?

Although Christians use the word “glory” in their religious language, what does the word really mean? It means to give God reverent praise, honour and thankfulness to Him for all His goodness.

Why you may ask, does God deserve such an exalted place in our lives? God has always existed in the past and will into eternity’s future. God is also powerful and He created everything (Genesis 1:1) by speaking the universe and everything in it into existence. (Hebrews 11:3) This means that God owns everything and everyone. We all belong to Him, whether we acknowledge Him as our spiritual king or not.

Our existence on this earth depends entirely on God’s provisions for us. What is God’s purpose for each of our lives? We are to display the worth and value God designed us to be. We are to glorify God and enjoy a spiritual relationship with Him through His Holy Spirit. This can only be achieved if we believe and trust God’s Son the Lord Jesus Christ to be our sin bearer and ask Him to take away all our sins. Jesus is our only hope and way for being accepted by God and allowed into that wonderful place called heaven.

God is also all knowing and His complete knowledge is totally amazing. He named the billions of stars in the night sky (Psalm 147) and He knows how many hairs are on each person’s head. (Matthew 10:30) God doesn’t want us to be ignorant of His ways and purposes. He gave us the Scriptures to teach us spiritual things and prepare us for the next life after this one is over. God wants us to trust what the Bible says, so He told us in advance how human history on this earth will end.



Will we trust God and believe what He says? To live the life of faith in the Lord Jesus, practise Philippians 4: 6: “Don’t worry about anything, instead, **pray about everything.**” When we pray about the very smallest matters troubling us each and every hour of the day, our trust in Him grows. But if we make all the small decisions ourselves, when a big situation comes along, we might search for God’s peace and direction in a crisis of faith. Feed your faith in God and your fears and doubts will die. **Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”**

As God is Spirit He is everywhere in the world at the same time. Do you find it scary to know that God knows what you are thinking right now? We cannot hide anything from Him. But some attitudes do kill the ability to love Him and bring glory and praise to God. These include self-importance (I know better than God), arrogance, pride, lack of self-control, greed, fear of making mistakes, focus on this world’s goals of success by obtaining plenty of goods, control over others, and amassing money without any plans to help those in physical need.

The Apostle Paul warned his co-worker Titus about people who claim they know God but they deny Him by the way they live. “They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.” (Titus 1:15-16)

Nothing reveals the merciful character and love of God more than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is worthy of our praise and grateful thanks. Are you ready for His return in the clouds, above the earth to save all those who love and trust Him? Before the terrible times during the Tribulation period of seven years begin, Jesus will take His own faithful servants back to heaven to be with Him forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) The times and the seasons of the rapture will not surprise those who are look for His return (1Thess. 5:4-6, Matt. 25:1-13, Luke 21:34-36 Rev. 3:3)

But the timing of the rapture, also called the “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13, will be as “a thief in the night” to those **not** watching the many “signs” heralding Christ’s soon return in the sky. (Heb. 10:25, Eph. 4:30, Luke 21:28). Watch for the destruction of the city of Damascus. (Isaiah 17:1)

“Watch therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36)

**Give God our Grateful Praise!**

## Watch and Pray

In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, Chapter 23, the Lord God told Moses about His appointed feasts that He wanted the Children of Israel to observe in special ways. These solemn holy days were rest days given to point to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jewish civic new year started on the Feast of Trumpets in Spring in the Southern Hemisphere and remembers the time when God created the world. Because the Jewish calendar has a 360-day year, this feast comes on a different date each time. This year the date is 6-8th September.

The sound of a trumpet is also associated with the rapture of believers trusting in Jesus as their Saviour from sin, or the time Jesus will return for his bride (1 Corinthians 15:52). Once He returns, there will be a wedding feast of celebration. Revelation 19:9 says, “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.” (NLT). He’s preparing us to celebrate!

But wait, you say: What about all this Covid-19 ill health and death across the world at present? Things are really in a mess. The Lord Jesus warned: “When you hear of wars and insurrections, don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place first, but the end won’t follow immediately... There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands.... But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution.” (Luke 21:9-12) Jesus also warned about deceivers, people who claim that they are God’s representative but are fake.

At this present time there are two world systems operating – God’s plans and the counter-plans of God’s enemy Satan. Those following God’s way for their lives will often be attacked by temptations that go against God. We can feel sorry for ourselves when adversity comes but we need to see it from a position of faith and trust that God is accomplishing things in negative times that He could not do otherwise while things are going well. Sometimes God even puts us into a difficult situation for His own purposes and we must not withdraw and so fail Him. When trials come we should be praying that God would bring good out of bad situations.

The Apostle Paul when imprisoned in Rome taught in the book of Philippians that no matter what was going on, he could see the silver lining in his negative circumstances and the hand of God in all of them. God had told him that he would go to Rome and spread the Gospel there. Paul could see that he wasn’t a prisoner of his circumstances but could walk in the joy of the Lord.

The joy of the Lord in the middle of troubles is very different from happiness. The world system will allow you to experience emotional well-being as long as circumstances are good and everything is going well. When things become unfavourable the happiness is gone immediately. This is not the joy of the Lord but a time to increase prayer.

Jesus said two things that appear to be opposites: No one knows the hour when Jesus will return for His bride (Matthew 24:36) and “Watch, therefore, because you do not know what day your Lord will come.” (Matthew 24:42) Christians are to be alert and active doing His will while they still have time.

There are many verses in the Scriptures speaking about rewards to be given out to believers in Christ when in heaven. This life of each Christian while living on earth is an apprenticeship for heaven and the only time rewards can be earned.

God has given promises to motivate us in difficult times so that we can be certain that what we do here by way of sacrifice and faithfulness will be counted for eternity. It's His idea to give rewards to each Christian who has spent their life in prayer, feeding the hungry and sharing the Gospel. God does not want us to have the attitude that just getting to heaven will be enough reward in itself. We are to apply ourselves to His teaching so that God has joy in being a rewarding heavenly Father.

When we stand before the Lord Jesus at the *bema* seat of Christ in heaven, rewards will be the evidence that we pleased the Lord with our life here on earth.

*When prayer becomes your habit,  
Miracles become your lifestyle.  
Never give up on prayer  
No matter what comes your way.*

## In God's Time

Just as many disciples of the Lord Jesus have difficulty discerning His will for their lives, they often fail to understand God's timing as well. God has His own seasons and plans and with God His timing is always perfect. God is event-orientated. He is never too early or too late but just on time.

In contrast, people live by the clock. In our world of hurry and rush, learning patience to wait for God's right time can be a source of frustration. We may become very disappointed with each unanswered prayer but we must trust Him to know what is best.

When God set Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden He had fellowship with them there. That was called the Age of Innocence but it didn't last very long. They were placed in a perfect environment and given only one command: to avoid the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When they failed to obey and inherited a sin nature, God didn't kill them off and start again. He promised in Genesis 3:15 that He would send His Son as a human being and Jesus would defeat Satan.

Nothing catches God by surprise. In Isaiah 46:9-10 God says: "Remember what happened long ago; acknowledge that I alone am God and that there is no one else like me. From the beginning I predicted the outcome; long ago I foretold what would happen. I said that my plans would never fail."

From the day Adam and Eve were chased out of the Garden until the day it started to rain on Noah's Ark this is called the "Age of Conscience." Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Society became so sinful and corrupt that God stepped in to save Noah and his family alive and destroyed all others in the Flood. From then on God spoke directly to chosen individuals in the Age of the Patriarchs but even these chosen men committed some terrible sins.

In God's plan from the beginning, people went from having one commandment to no commandments at all, then to direct dealings with the Patriarchs like Abraham. After that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and many other laws for the Age of the Law. Not one person in this age ever kept all ten commands throughout his lifetime, no matter what the circumstances. King David broke all ten of them.

So corrupted and perverted the keeping of the laws became that it was necessary for God to scrap the whole system and replace it with the Age of Grace. To accomplish that God Himself stepped out of space and eternal time, took on the form of sinful man, kept the Law on our behalf and paid the price for our sin penalty by His own death. By doing this He made a way for all people to be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus through His gracious underserved favour to us.

In God's timing that took nearly 4,000 years between when the promise was given in the Garden and when the Baby was born in a manger at Bethlehem. Sadly many of the world's people reject this free offer of God's kindness to pay for the person's debt of sinning against God. They prefer to live a life of pleasure without worrying about such future things until it's too late to do anything about it. In unbelief, they deny that the wages of sin bring death and judgment.

The Age of Grace concludes at the Rapture when the Lord Jesus will call out from the earth all those who love and trust Him. We cannot know God's timing in this but must be prepared and ready for when Jesus calls. In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 the Apostle Paul says: "God did not choose us to suffer his anger, but to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us in order that we might live together with him, whether we are alive or dead when he comes."

At this time the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit will be taken away, giving Satan and sin free reign on earth for seven years. The Scriptures say that the end result of this will be the near-destruction of all human life. When will this happen? In 2 Peter 3:9 it says: “The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.”

God’s will for all people is that they believe in His only begotten Son, thus by doing so He may justify them and set their feet on the narrow way that leads to heaven.



## Listen for the Trumpet

When God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, He set a pattern of rest for people. In Leviticus Chapter 25 God instructed the Israelite people to observe a rest year for the land of Canaan every seventh year when they entered it after being freed from slavery in Egypt.

This is called the Shemitah year and Jewish people are to trust that God will provide abundant food harvests in the sixth year for their needs. Also debts between Jewish relatives and neighbours are to be cancelled on the last day of the seventh year.

Christians are indebted to the Jewish people of times past who wrote the Bible for us. They also gave us our Jewish Messiah. We are to pray for the 'peace of Jerusalem' and we should always remember the words of Scriptures, regarding the Jews: Those who bless them, God will bless and those who harm them, God will harm. (Genesis 12:2-3)

In the end times Jesus warned that there will be wars and rumours of war, plagues, famine and earthquakes in various places. Countries will fight one another but His disciples are not to be troubled by these things as they must happen before the Rapture and Tribulation. Some Christians may tell you that the word 'rapture' isn't in the Bible. They imply that if you believe in a rapture of godly people before the time of God's wrath for sin on the earth, you hold a vain hope in something that's non-existent. The rapture will happen when Jesus returns to the air above the earth to take up out of the world all those who love Him and obey Him, to be with Him forever.

The word 'rapture' isn't in the Bible because it's from a Latin word 'rapturo', and not a Greek one. The Apostle Paul wrote all his letters in Greek. The Greek word is 'harpazo', which is found in 2 Corinthians Chapter 12, Verse 2 and 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4, Verse 17, but both 'rapturo' and 'harpazo' mean 'caught up'.

The catching up or rapture of all those who believe in Christ will happen on God's time schedule and be the first return of Jesus. Jesus promised to save His faithful people from God's wrath coming on the world in the Tribulation. (1 Thess. 5:9, Revelation 3:10 – Jesus said: "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world.")

The Rapture must occur before the start of the Tribulation period and the appearance of the Antichrist.

Following the Tribulation, the second time Jesus returns to earth, His feet will land on the Mount of Olives, which will be split in two as predicted in Zechariah Chapter 14. Jesus will fight and destroy those armies coming against the Jewish people.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Titus, Chapter 2, that believers in Christ "should give up ungodly living and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this world, as we wait for the blessed Day we hope for, when the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ will appear." We're to be ready at all times because Jesus said He would come at an hour when we don't expect Him.

In 1st Corinthians 15: 52 it says: "Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye.

For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we (believers in Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection to pay for the sins of the world) shall all be changed...What will die must be changed into what cannot die." Listen for the trumpet!

## The Primary Sign of the Rapture

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation Chapter 3: 14-21, the Lord Jesus describes the condition of the churches in the last stage of the Church Age before the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. Many individual churches are already in a state of **apostasy**, abandoning their religious faith and following their own desires, not living by faith in Jesus and not preaching the Gospel of Christ.

Jesus said to His disciples: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.” (Luke 24:47).

Those churches that do not proclaim God’s holy way of living and His Gospel are preaching a different Gospel, and their pastors are therefore cursed (Galatians 1:9). “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God [the church]; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey [preach and live by] the gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17).

We know that the great apostasy, or falling away from the faith, precedes the introduction of the Antichrist: “Let no one deceive you [Matthew 24:4] in any way. For that day [the day of the Lord - judgment] will not come, unless the rebellion [Apostasy, Falling Away from the Faith] comes first, and the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the [rebuilt] temple of God [in Jerusalem, Israel], proclaiming himself to be God” (II Thessalonians 2:3-4).

It is imperative that the true church of Christ call all dead and Laodicean churches to repent before the return of Christ. The problem is, when true Christians stand up and denounce these churches, they are shouted down by those who prefer to cling to false doctrine. Paul warned: “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers [pastors] to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (II Timothy 4:3).

Jesus said: “If you do not wake up [and proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins in my name], I will come like a thief and you will not know at what hour I will come against you [I will be your enemy]. ...The one who conquers [remains in the faith] will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the [Holy] Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:2-6).

The church of Laodicea, which is the last church that Christ addressed, is one where Jesus is not even welcome. Christ treats these people as if they were heathen who needed to hear the Gospel to be saved. He counsels:

“I know your works [without faith]; you are neither hot [zealous for God’s Word] or cold [outspoken unbelievers]. Would that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm [indifferent], and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth [I will reject you in disgust]. For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing’ [my faith is in my wealth], not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked [Gospel-less]. I counsel you to buy gold [the Gospel] refined in the fire [of the Holy Spirit], so that you may be rich, and white garments [faithfulness] so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen.”

“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock... If anyone hears my voice and opens the door [receives the Gospel], I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me [at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb].

The one who conquers [remains in the faith], I will grant him to sit with me on my throne [he will rule with me] as I also conquered [at the cross] and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:15-22).

Unfortunately, people need to be honest with themselves about what type of church they are in. This is difficult because the church is usually our social circle, and those who make waves are eventually shunned. This is especially true when a member of the congregation challenges the pastor who is not handling God’s word properly.

The job of the true church of Christ is to preach the Gospel in season and out of season. That means that whether the Gospel is popular or frowned upon in a society, the church must remain true to its mission. We are not here to be entertainers, or engage in ‘church growth’; we are here to save souls from the lake of fire.

## **WATCH, WARN AND WIN SOULS**

## God's Promises for Your Future

Did you know that nearly one third of the Bible is prophecy? Many of the predictions God gave to us through His prophets and sometimes by His own words have already come true. The prophecies of the coming to earth of God the Son (Jesus Christ) in human flesh have all been fulfilled. But the end time prophecies are still to be completed.

The last book of the Bible is The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John and in the third verse of Chapter 1 it says: "Happy is the one who reads this book, and happy are those who listen to the words of this prophetic message and obey what is written in this book. For the time is near when all these things will happen."

The Lord Jesus gave John a number of prophecies for the future of the world, the churches and Israel. Jesus tells us things in advance for many reasons. One is so that we may be on guard against doing things displeasing to Him. Another is to show His holiness at judgment. Prophetic declarations of future events also serve to comfort. When we see some prophecy take place we know that God is still in control of world affairs and we need not be afraid of things to happen in the future.

At this present time we live in the Age of God's Mercy. Any person no matter how bad and sinful they've been in their life, can come to the Lord Jesus asking for mercy, begging forgiveness for their many sins and acknowledging that no one else can help them with their sin problem. That belief or trust that Jesus Christ can deal with their sins is called 'saving faith.' All human beings need this salvation to save them from God's punishment for sin and wickedness.

The Lord Jesus does not turn away anyone who sincerely asks Him. He takes the person out of Satan's kingdom and places them in His own kingdom, giving them the Holy Spirit to live in them as proof that they've been changed from bad to good. Each day from then on they live by daily faith, believing that God's plan for their life is the only one to follow.

Becoming a believer in Christ means that there will still be times of falling back into sin. The new believer wants to have a clear conscience at all times and as soon as the person realises he's done something wrong, he comes urgently to Jesus in prayer asking for forgiveness. God's promise to such people is that in the world beyond this one they will live with Him forever.

Some people call themselves Christians and try to live day by day in faith but don't have the saving faith they need to start with, as they haven't surrendered themselves to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Even though they don't see it, they are still in Satan's kingdom.

They, along with all those who have rejected or neglected God's offer of free salvation, have a promise from God too. For God has promised in 2nd Thessalonians Chapter 1 that all those who reject God and who do not obey the Good News about our Lord Jesus will suffer in torment in the place reserved for Satan and his demons.

The Age of God's Mercy will one day come to an end; no one knows exactly when. But there are many signs that show it isn't far away. The nation of Israel is watched as God's timepiece. Israelites have returned to their nation in unbelief but interest in the things of God is increasing. They particularly want to build their next temple.

God has promised them in Ezekiel 37 that He would take the children of Israel from among the nations and bring them into their own land...Then they shall be His people and He will be their God.



At the end of the Age of God's Mercy the Lord Jesus will call out all those who trusted in Him. People will arise from their graves and those still living each day for Him will be caught away from the world to be in heaven, safe as promised from the great distress caused during the following seven years of God's anger against sin and wickedness. May you give much thought to where you will spend eternity!

**God's Promises are Guaranteed.**

< END OF "CHRISTIAN LIVING" BEACONS >

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