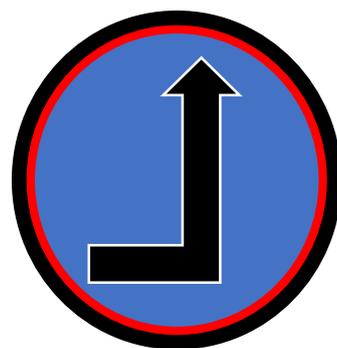


THE

LORD'S

WAY ...

by **LEE MARVIN ANCELL**



**The texts of the bible which are quoted in this short book
are from the
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THE LORD'S WAY ...

PROLOGUE

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM --- THE "YA'REH' PROTOCOL

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Dear Reader,

The following set of short pictures are for the purpose of showing what we believe here, to anyone who wants to know us better or to cast their lives with us. Each of these topics can be greatly expanded, but these are kept short and as understandable as possible. They are not all simple, but they all are what it means to be 'simply Christian' in this confusing world.

Let it be known that we do not consider ourselves as a denomination, as most people would normally use that word today. We are a simple group of Christians who want to practice 'simple Christianity'. We merely want to restore the church to as close an ideal as to what the first century church used, as Jesus established it, without using any dividing lines and or a single focus ministries.

We firmly believe that there are no dividing walls between peoples like race or region. Every person, male or female, red, yellow, black or white are welcomed with open arms, just as Jesus welcomed us, as individuals, when we first came to The Lord. This is His church, it is not ours. We seek to open our hearts and our lives to whoever will seek this same Lord as we have sought.

L. M. Ancell

February, 2017

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..."

THE YAREH PROTOCOL

The idea of 'fearing the Lord', is one that most Christians are aware of, to a varying degree of understanding. Most people in the various churches have the idea of a giant, all seeing eye, that watches over every action of mankind, waiting all the while to put a mark down against the one observed. This vision of God, the 'traffic-cop-in-the-bushes', is one of the major obstacles, currently, to the advancement of the faith. It is the father of all conservative and fundamental thought, in my opinion. Should this be our governing thought in the current world? This is a very good question, if you have ever stopped to think about it.

We shall examine, first, the functional idea of our 'fearing God', and then look some of the major points of conflict that arises out of that vision of God, the one which we all tend to carry in the back of our minds, with us, every day, everywhere we go. These will go from the defensive position of "You cannot judge me", to one of the role of my will versus the word of God, and thus our conflict with some of the long-standing traditions of history.

So, where do we begin? For me, the logical place to start is with the biblical text and its statements on this whole topic.

First: In the initial encounter between the creature (man) and the creator (God), a relationship was defined very clearly. Mankind was to be under the authority of God, regardless of what man wanted or even that which made man feel good. God was in charge. There was to be no arguments on this question. That was the simply way it was. Mankind did have a degree of dominion over all things under him, the plants and the animals, but man was going to have to obey what God said, for God was supreme. Mankind was not then, nor is he today, God. This is the great forgotten fact in our world today.

God told the very first man, "You can eat from every tree in the garden, but not the one in the middle of the garden." [Genesis 3:1-4 NASV] That is the portrait of God that Genesis intended to make to all of mankind, in every age and epoch, from the beginning until now.

Second: God has continually stressed the fact of man's subordination to Himself and to His defined will. We only need to read Deuteronomy 6:13 and Deuteronomy 10:20 to see that this is so. It was never repealed. Jesus even upheld this fundamental and controlling idea of fearing God within the New Testament perspective, as is recorded in Luke 4:8.

We next need to look at the Hebrew term which stands as the standard pattern for this relationship based on fear. The Hebrew term for 'fear' is 'yirah'. It means several things, all

of which are incorporated into one single action. To begin with, the word does mean 'fear' as in the quaking of the knees sort of fear one experiences at the recognition of impending doom.

This sense of an almighty judge and the potential of his displeasure is not the end of our thinking, however. It is there and it is incorporated into the whole, very substantially. "God say what He means and means what he says", as the old adage goes. It is true. But, even more significant is the idea that what God has said is always instructive to the creature, man. Man must be very careful to try and do what God has said.

We can put this in a more positive light, as the Hebrew does do, by saying that Man is to 'synch' his life with that of God's revealed will, a will that is open for all to see equally and which does not have a multitude of interpretations, thus making it universally understandable. If a person seeks to synch his / her life with God's will, then a state of harmony will exist that is total and joyous between the creator and the creature, just as Genesis 3 describes. Fear is both, then, a negative and control oriented sound concept and a very positive one as well when all of the various parts are in harmony.

To go one step deeper into this general idea of functional harmony, if one were to tune a guitar, the strings would vibrate in such a manner as to produce a harmonious chord, if the instrument were actually 'in-tune'. If we have listened for a very long time to that which is not totally harmonious, we will need to investigate methods by which our ears are functionally retrained, because poor harmonics, if listened to long enough become the norm and the true norm then becomes 'odd sounding'.

In the music world, this pursuit of pure and true harmonics is crucial, -even in rap and jazz. In the spiritual world, our whole harmonious resonance, to that base line of God's will, is also crucial. But this time it is crucial not only to our interpersonal relationships and our joys in daily life, but now it is crucial to our eternal salvation itself, making it doubly significant.

The world may be able bear an 'out of tune symphony', but my soul will still have to answer to God the Almighty for the harmonics produced, just as Cains did there in the opening of Genesis. We will not be able to fool God with our clever and good natured excuses, just, again, as Cain was not able to fool God with his sarcasm about being his brother's keeper. [Genesis is not there in the bible's opening pages just to record a neat little story which we can quickly teach in a bible school setting. It is there to condition every one's mind to the fact that 'God is God', the Supreme Authority and thus the Final Arbitrator.

In summing up this very brief word study, we are able to say legitimately that the strings of the guitar we play for entertainment, and the lives we live for Godly approval, must be in perfect harmony, one with the other strings in the quartet of God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, and 'me'. Entertainment will never equal spirituality, and spirituality will never entertain anyone. Spirituality is giving to God the subservience that always elevates Him to the top rung, while I play 'second fiddle'. This is a very lost concept within the teachings of many / most protestant and catholic groups today. The 'self' is the base line and not 'God's proscribed will'. We will have opportunity to examine this more in the things yet to come.

This is the easy part of our opening case. The following stage is the philosophical one and the application one must make to some of our own interpretations and non-harmonious preaching's. This where it can get very personal and very hard, particularly if we are one of those touched directly by illustrative examples we shall use to explore this 'yirah' protocol of realistic harmony step farther. *[All things have a philosophy behind them. The trick is not to get taken captive in false or misleading philosophy and the hidden agendas of men.]*

We shall look in the coming pages at several areas where the pursuit of 'yirah' can possibly challenge us today: those defensive lines of argument that say "you cannot judge me", and the arena of 'esoteric spiritism' where we fight the conflict between personal will worship". and historical traditions, over things like music, gender roles and fundamental preferences. We will be challenged greatly by many things, -perhaps, --but the end goal, must, it simply must be, to learn that ***the real beginning of wisdom, is to fear the Lord.*** So, we ask the question, "What chords will tie us to the cord of submission to God and His will most securely." These following points are the starting points of our life long search to do what Proverbs 1:7 commends us to do.

*"...the conclusion, when all has been heard is
FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS
because this applies to every person.
For God will bring every act to judgement,
everything which is hidden, whether it be good or evil."*

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)



WE ARE NOT JUST TO 'KNOW ABOUT GOD' , BUT WE ARE TO 'DO WHAT HE SAYS', EXACTLY, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

HE IS GOD, AFTER ALL, THE HIGHEST OF THE HIGH.

NEHEMIAH 9:6

"You alone are the LORD You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You..."

Isaiah 66:2

"For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Revelation 4:11

"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

THE LORD CREATOR: POWER PERSONIFIED

The very idea of “creation” sparks great debate today over the processes used to achieve this world, this universe, in which we live. Some are fanatical devotees to science, the big bang theory and evolution. Others are dyed in the wool ‘fiat creationist’. [*“Fiat” means that one believes that God just spoke and everything came out of those words of His, exactly as we see them today.*] It can be a very ‘hot’ between the scientist and the fiat creationist when they just walk into the same arena to display their cases.

What is really amazing though, is that both sides cannot actually prove their case in a court of law. There is no way that either group can come to a point of agreement without compromising their particular “faith”, either in either Science or in God. If one must reference their “faith”, first, this automatically becomes a personal and subjective opinion, and that will always be unfair and circumstantial only: -therefore, -no proof. The fact is, is that there is no over-powering evidence then, upon which to base a conclusion, on either side, other than my personal preferences and theories. We accept that condition, readily. **It is our faith** that God was there before time, space, matter, science, technology and even before life existed, and has been so from eternity. We have a much bigger fish to fry than this little debate offers.

We here are then not really all that given to participating in this debate, other than to say, **we simply believe that God just spoke, and it happened.** How does God actually speak? We have no idea, He just does. Nothing more is said, biblically speaking: nothing more really even needs to be said. If this puts us in the “fiat” camp, -so be it. Because we believe strongly in the word of God, we could even leave this discussion at this very ‘fiat’ statement and could then rest assured that we were well within the frame of God’s will and approval, accepting Him as Creator. Besides, if God had known that we would need some added information upon which to build our ‘faith’ case in a court of law, God, being God, the All -Fore Seeing One, would have told us. To believe otherwise, to believe that God just somehow forgot to tell the actual process of creation, is to hold a position that says that God made a fundamental mistake / oversight in not giving us this added information.

It is necessary to say that, God is God, and He makes no mistakes. Furthermore, God does not make oversights. How can He, and still be “God”. The intricacies of the creation puzzle remain clouded.

What does need to be made very clear, and very simple, is the same thing that **Genesis 1 and 2** makes for us, yet today. The ‘Way of the Lord’ begins and ends with the very idea of God, the almighty creator and final judge in everything. We cannot be a proper child of God the Father if we disrespect Him in any way. The bible begins by presenting mankind with the fact of “God”. He is the point of all beginning. This topic of “God” is then the central concept of these first two chapters of God’s communication with mankind, not the creation process. The very last words in the bible, **Revelation 22:18-21**, oddly enough, actually speaks of the very same idea: God is the final voice in all matters. Let us let Him be, therefore, “God”. That is the bigger, and better, way.

This common ground between **Genesis 1 - 2** and **Revelation 22**, is not just a simple bit of circumstance. It is planned, and that for a reason. In both cases, in Genesis and in Revelation, one speaking to the newly created world, and then the final statement made to the expectant Christian family awaiting

God's return, one core idea remains: **-all power, all methods, and all judgement rests with God, and with God alone, always:** He is the all-powerful and the all-merciful, the all-jealous God. This is the very purpose of the creation story in the largest possible understanding!! This is the message of the whole bible in a very real way! This is the hope in which live yet today! God is in total charge and as Creator, He cares for His creation.

The creation story in Genesis can be studied from several different perspectives, and we will cover some of those in due time. For this moment, however, to note that the beginning and the end of the book is all about one common thing, "God, the awesome power above all other powers". No country, no physis, no government, will ever have such dominion as God has.

The fact behind this point, one that is often lost on modern man, is that no idea that a mere man can come up with is bigger and more powerful, than the idea of "God". His power is at the very top of the pyramid. His wisdom cannot be challenged for it remains supreme, above all lesser wisdoms. His justice is absolutely pure and universally fair for all of mankind. His love is larger than any love that a mere man can ever even comprehend. His presence is everywhere, all of the time, from the far corners of the universe, to the here and now in our lives, and even across the street. His knowledge is all encompassing, because the simple fact is He created all knowable knowledge too, when He created the world. Yes, indeed, God is the biggest idea that can ever be expressed, in any language!

What more do we need to say? What more do we need to stand for as His children, than God? We need to really get down and wrestle with the whole tendency to, and here comes a very big word, 'anthropomorphize' our understanding of God, and thus creating a picture of God that is based on our understanding of men and women everywhere, with the emotions and attributes of those men and women being the measuring stick by which "we judge God". [To **anthropomorphize** is the act of making God have totally man like qualities and then trying to understand God like we would try to understand other human beings, judging God from the standards of a mere man.]

A prime example of where this 'giving to God' of some man-made boundaries with in which to live and function, is seen in such ideas as of gender and role identification, or of a rejection of God's jealousy and ultimate power in favour of a totally all loving, care free and rule free nature, with man's application of his own definition of such things as 'love'. It would even go to the extreme position of saying that God does not require anything of man but that he blanket-saves all men, regardless of anything that that man has ever done, or anything that has ever been written by his disciples who were supposed to be under His writ of inspiration.

These are all false ideas, coming from what man hopes God is like so that that particular man gets to do, and say, whatever he wants. Simply put, man cannot, and should not, change anything that God the creator has said. He is the originator: He is God. We must accept the fact of God, then as one accepts the fact of a superior power over one's self and as we accept the way that He wants things to go, -the way He wants things to be done. It is God who has dominion over mankind and not man with all of the desires of man's heart. This has been the great, and continuous, struggle of the ages. It is simpler and safer, to just take heart from Genesis 1 and 2 and let God be God. He is the creator and "I" am not the creator: I am the creature. He has dominion. God knowing of our struggle with His dominion, knew this long before He ever spoke, and commissioned Jesus to come and free mankind from the burden of all of various rebellions, sins, and misconception, on the cross. **Let us pay very close attention then to God, The Lord, and to His Way, in all things, everyday.** [Ephesians 1:3-4] Amen, anyone??

I Peter 1:24-25

...For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was proclaimed to you.

THE LORD'S WORD: **AUTHORITY PERSONIFIED**

God has always used one form of 'covenant', or another, to instruct and guide his people. In the garden of Eden, the man and his wife, Adam and Eve, had a covenant with God that they were to keep. It was simple to understand and easy to fulfil, until the devil spoke to Eve and convinced her it was okay to eat from the one tree from which they were forbidden to eat.

It was from that moment when she, and her husband, ate the forbidden fruit that the covenant was broken beyond repair. Adam and Eve paid the price for their rebellion and were cast out of the Garden. It is all found there in the opening chapters of **Genesis**, chapters **2** and **3**. The question for us today is, why was this recorded in the bible for all the generations yet to come? Why? Later, when the book of Proverbs was being written and compiled by Solomon, it is stated, "The fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom..." [**Proverbs 9:10**]. The whole of human history so far had been for the learning of this one crucial lesson.

God, from the very beginning, has told mankind what he expects of them. Never has there been a time when mankind was without a 'word from God' to go to for directions and thus to follow in all daily life.

After, the days of the training period, which is actually the whole of the Old Testament, Jesus came to Earth. Yes, it is true, the old law was **to lead us** to the Christ. The one specific rule was still, "...fear the Lord, for this is the beginning of wisdom...". It has remained the same throughout all of the years since, just as it remained supreme in all of the days back to the days there in the Garden: "**the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**". Remember, do not fear those who can merely take your life from you, but rather that which can take away your soul. Pay careful attention therefore to God and to His word.

And what of His word today? One of the best passages to look at is found in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:22b-33, it says, "...take **heed in everything he says** to you! And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." Maybe, just maybe, it would be a good idea to find out everything that He said and then to do it. It is all contained there, in the word, in the bible. No other book takes precedence over the words of the bible. It is God current words to all of mankind, and nothing has come, or will come, which seeks to dispose the word from its position, will ever stand. It is the Lord's word.

Another aspect of the Lord's word is that He has always let mankind know when the older word is to be replaced by the newer covenant of His word. In the case for us today, we can go to This statement from Paul, "... God has taken the old law out of the way, having nailed it to he cross..." [**Colossians 2:14**] There it is, in simple language and in very clear language. What it means, however, is very significant indeed.

God has told us that we are no longer under the various covenant-laws of the Old Testament. The laws and regulation of the Patriarchs is now set aside, the Ten Commandments are now set aside, and all the laws of Judaism are set down and no longer to be followed, -at all. They all have done their intended training job of getting mankind into a prepared state of mind whereby Jesus could come down and save mankind. In point of fact the whole legal standing of every law, in every age prior to Jesus, has now been set down, having accomplished the role of getting us to the point of this moment. Remember, the real high point of all of His work from the Garden down to that Hill of Calvary, the saving of you and me, and of George, and of Ling, and of Bope`, if they are willing **to accept** Jesus as their new and absolute Lord and Master, and **to heed** everything He has said, and had inspired, in His New Word. **[Colossians 2:16-23]**

What next? Paul continues in his letter to the church in Colossae and tells them that they are "...to keep seeking the things above". **[Colossians 3:1-4]** This does not mean inventing off of your own any new commands, no softening of any given commands, and especially no hardening of any commands. These three points are not right. They all fundamentally change what the divine, all wise and all seeing God has set up. He does not need or want us meddling with His word. **It is perfect as it is!!!!!!** So, let us all keep our hands off of the Word and let God simply talk to us clearly, simply, and in such a way that every person in every age, in every land throughout the whole world, can come to the exact same conclusion and produce the same church-congregation as all of the others. God is not cruel nor is He devious. He wants all people to have one common word, producing one common result for one common end, the eternal salvation of every person who will follow that word, complete and exact as it already is.

Consider these passages:

I Corinthians 4:6 "...do not exceed what is written..."

Ephesians 3:4 "...when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ

Acts 20:32 "...and now I commend you to God and the word of His grace which is able to build you up and to give to you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

II Thessalonians 3:1 "Finally brethren pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did with you..."

II Peter 1:20-21 "....but know this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will , but by men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

John 17:17b "...sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth..."

The Lord's word is the one we have with us yet today. It is complete, and it is never to be changed, again. Any person that says otherwise is false.

Ezekiel 36:26-28

I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes. . . . You shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:26-28)

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, says Jehovah.

THE LORD'S COVENANTS

God, The Lord Above Us, wants us all to know Him intimately and to know His way in all matters of consequence. This is very special and very unique. God loves all of His creatures, but especially the central character of the whole creative act, -mankind.

God loves, and the fact that He loves, compels Him to let man know what mankind's in which man finds himself, historically speaking, and the way that man is to act is, to please the Lord. This communication of God's will has been done by 'covenants'.

The very **first covenant** was the **Covenant of Eden**, between God and His principle creation, Adam and Eve. They were to simply keep the garden, and refrain from eating of the tree in the center of the Garden, essentially. This was indeed, simple, but it was never intended to be the eternal way of things! How can we say that???? God knew that there would come a point, in even this very simplest of covenants, where man would be tempted and then eventually eat. In **Ephesians 1:3-4**, God states through the pen of the apostle Paul, that Jesus was planned to be the salvation of mankind before the creation of the world and all of its parts! Before God spoke things into existence, Jesus was on the road to the cross! That is how we know that Eden was intended to be just a temporary station in the history of the world.

What happened next? Well, instead of seeing this as a dispensation, we should just see it as module one of a learning process. In this first module, God taught two very important lessons: first, "He is The Eternal Power ", and second "He is the final authority." This is emphasized by the first two revelations of God's name. In Genesis 1, He is called 'Elohim', or "The God of All Power ". The fact that this first chapter is dedicated to God's creative genius and awesome power fulfils this side of the introduction nicely. The second chapter reveals that God is the authority to which we all must submit ourselves. He gave the statement of the 'garden rules', He investigated the fall of man, and He passes the sentence that kicked man out of the garden and out into the world outside of that garden. The term for God in chapter two is "Yah-weh", or "The God of All Authority". 'The creative power' and 'the authoritative control over all things' is the primary communicated message of these two chapters. It is no less true today.

The covenant of Eden was followed by the covenant with the people who lived before the great flood. This is sometimes called '**The Antediluvian Covenant**'. It affected everyone from Cain and his brother Able, down to the people who did not listen to Noah. This too was a simple covenant of "do good, live good, and most important, Honour God by all of your actions and thoughts". Man, choosing to be His own boss and doing what he wanted to do, set the express will of God aside so that man was now able to come, go, and think just as he wanted, without any respect to God at all. Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives, did do what God had asked of them in this covenant and were saved from the rapidly rising waters via the ark! The others had access, in some undisclosed way, as to God's way, but they chose to go with what made them feel good and thus full of their own lives and self-importance. These others, the rest of the entire world, perished in the bucketing rain waters.

Oh, it grieved God that man did not choose Him and justice then required the penalty be exacted, and it was. It grieved Him sorely because He loved man.

This covenant stage was now completed with mankind learning that God is very capable of upholding His will, totally. Now it is time for stage three of the covenantal learning module, the covenant with Noah.

This **third covenant**, the **covenant with Noah**, held up the points of the first two, and added some additional elements that man was now more ready to receive. In this third covenant, man was to recognize God as the ultimate power, again, and man was to recognize God as the ultimate authority, again. But now, man was to deeply recognize God as the jealousy God that He is and to obey Him explicitly, doing exactly what He told man to do. Obedience is the key word here, with man obeying God, not the other way around.

Man, remained a creature throughout these first three covenants, -cared for by God, loved by God, but man was not 'gods', himself. All the while, man is learning what 'God' is all about and learning to respect God as the one and only supreme Lord. God is Lord: God is in total charge. -- If only man could get this idea through his thick head, because it is still that way, -period. God is God: the only God there is!!!

The next covenant, **the fourth covenant**, was made first with Abraham, the temporal 'father' of the children of Israel. This is called the "**Patriarchal Covenant**"; -the covenant with the patriarchs. Rules began to multiply in numbers, sacrifices were required, countries were left and the people began to come together as a nation, with all governance directed, still, from the very top, down to the earthly sections of the people. The people had learned much through the centuries from the closed gates of Eden to the tents of Abraham there in Canaan, but more was yet to be learned in order for man to be ready to receive the ultimate gift of God, Jesus. God the people about this coming messiah, little by little, but they still had to live out the lesson of captivity in Egypt, before receiving the ultimate challenge of the covenant with Moses with all of its impossible law keeping. This fourth covenant was there to prepare the people for the significant test of wills and memory, handed out by Egyptian taskmasters. It had been restated to Isaac, and then to Jacob, and finally to Joseph. These 'patriarchs' were entrusted to keep the people together and aware of who and what God was all about. -----then came the time in Egypt.

During the time in Egypt, the people transitioned from a nation of free people to a nation of slaves. It was hard. The existence of options were taken away. The whip hurt their backs. The vision of God was constantly challenged by being over worked, tired, and no one to feed their minds, Yes, just like at the closing of the gates of Eden, at the tilling of the ground for food to live on, at the building of that tower, at the coming of all that rain, the people of God faced the prospect of being annihilated, of being totally wiped out, murdered and worked to death, literally. Who would survive? Who would see the rise of God, the great teacher, at the head of His beloved family? Who would now lead them?

The answer was Moses, the son of slaves who grew up in the household of Pharaoh. We see this princely person finally come to the aid of a slave when he took up the cause of these

down trodden peoples. He slew the Egyptian taskmaster and had to suffer banishment from his home, family, and countrymen. He was 40 years old.

For the next 40 year's, he tended sheep out in the desert. What a come down: from the delicacies of the royal court to the bland diets of a desert tribesman, with poor clothes. But, there, in that desert setting, he learned a great deal about the methods and the trials of being a leader, standing in the middle of a bunch of bleating sheep. It must have been hard, but it was beneficial. At the age of 80, and that of our years, God appeared to him in a burning bush and ordered him to go back to Egypt to lead the people out on the great exodus back to Canaan. He, reluctantly, agreed and accepted the leadership of God in all things. We can only imagine the aches and pains this must have caused an elderly, but go he went.

There in Egypt, he was the instrument by which Pharaoh got a ten-lesson course in just who God really was. The people were set free. Troubles were yet to come, but the people now had a leader, a direction, and an understanding of what this God was all about. They could see Him, day and night: a pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. This God feed them, gave them drink, and walked with them all the way to mount Sinai, where they received the full discourse of laws by which they were to live. This was where the covenant passed over to Moses, thus this is called the **Covenant of Moses**, -the fifth great covenant.

These laws were rigid and all consuming. These laws were about how to sacrifice and what to sacrifice, and when to sacrifice. These laws were about all of the areas of their lives. It was a very ponderous amount. These laws told how families were to behave, how business was to be run, and how much they were to contribute to the coffers. This law was over the top, as it needed to be. Why did it need to be so heavy and so harsh? Because in this set of laws, God was giving them one of the last training modules, a module on what a legal based life style was really like.

It was totally totalitarian. It was heavy. It boggled the mind, totally, every day and in every way, this law spoke of legalism. ---But it just was not intended to be the final 'rule-of-the-day'. There is only one more covenant to come: -the **Covenant of Jesus**. We call this the New Testament. This last covenant is the covenant of salvation, given to everyone who believes, and not to a select few whose ancestors walked the 'wilderness way', back to the promised land. This covenant is what God had planned all along, with all of the training modules taking mankind one step closer to being able to understand what was truly needed and available in God's only son, the Messiah, the Christ, THE LORD. His way took time and just a few lectures would never have done the trick. It needed experience amongst the corn rows, and in the divisive construction projects, in the leaving of established homes, in the living among alien peoples, in the fighting the temptations of sin, all while facing God directly. It need the experience of flood and of God's wrath, let alone an understanding of the plight of those who are held in slavery, of those opposed by neighbours who did not welcome them always, of jobs that were hard to find, of houses that were substandard, of prejudices and high prices for the basic necessities of life. The world needed these things, bad as they can be at times, so the blessings of 'life in Christ Jesus can be cherished Justas it is, without enhancements, but only with gentle loving obedience. He is God after all !!! He is the power, the authority, the judge, and He is the Father who forgives, through the blood of Jesus. **Hallelujah.**

Daniel 2:44

“...and in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure for ever.”

THE LORD'S MESSIAH

From the very beginning God has planned the coming of one distinct and loving saviour for whoever chooses to believe and to obey. That planned 'person' was, is, and will only Jesus Christ, The Son of God Himself. In Ephesians 1:3-4, we are told that this is the case! The kingdom has arrived.

The following list of scriptures is a list of passages that show God's revelation of this coming ultimate hope. There is little need for explanation of these and they are thus left just as they are. But some are specially noted due to their more expressed content. They are marked in red ink. They are taken in order of occurrence in the Old Testament.

PROPHECY STATED

1. Genesis 3:15 [...born of a woman]
2. Genesis 12:3 [...from Abraham / **blessing to all**]
3. Genesis 22:18 [...done free will]
4. Genesis 49:10 [...will hold the rod of office]
5. Exodus 12:1ff [...be **the Passover Lamb**]
6. Ruth 4:4-9 [...be the Redeemer / **the Go'el (1)**]
7. II Samuel 7:12-16 [...of the lineage **of David**, the King]
8. Psalms 2:1-12 [...would be **God's Son**]
9. Psalms 22:1-31 [...pierced]
10. Psalms 118:25-29 [...the great rejected cornerstone]
11. Isaiah 7:14 [...**born of a virgin**]
12. Isaiah 9:6-7 [...very special / mighty God]
13. Isaiah 35:5-6 [...**healing** signs given]
14. Isaiah 40:3-5 [... forerunner first]
15. Isaiah 52:13ff [...would be a suffering servant]
16. Isaiah 62:1-2 [...redeemer (2)]
17. Jeremiah 31:31 [...bring a **new covenant**]
18. Hosea 11:1 [...called from Egypt]
19. Micah 5:2 [...born in **Bethlehem**]
20. Zechariah 11:12-13 [...betray for 30 pieces of silver]

PROPHECY FULFILLED

- Romans 16:20
Acts 3:24-25
John 3:16
Luke 3:23
John 1:29-36
I Peter 1:18-22
Matthew 1:1
Mark 1:11 / Acts 13:33
Matthew 27:39-46
Peter 2:6-8
Luke 1:31-35
Colossians 2:3
Matthew 11:4-6
Matthew 3:1-3
Acts 8:32-35
Luke 4:17-30
Luke 22:20 / Hebrews 12:24
Matthew 2:13-15
Matthew 2:1-6
Matthew 27:3-10

This list is short, but there many more that could have been added. The point is that, step by step, God was continually revealing things that were yet to happen, -in some cases they were centuries yet to come and go before the fulfilment of the events that were written about by the prophets of the Old Testament. Most of these could not be faked in any way, but all were proven to be true by the eye witnesses who actually observed them as they happened.

This list, and others like it, has been taken from the work of others, in this case from the Jews for Jesus. It does not require any special group commission to make your own list, in fact, it is a very good idea as you read to note the passages that contain these glimpses into the future, and then to find where they are recorded as being fulfilled in the New Testament. [I personally use a small cross in the margin of my bible with the letters "J" and "C" on each side of that cross.] Remember, the people were lost, when they 'lost the plot and stopped studying on their own. "... When you read, you can understand my insight..." **Ephesians 3:4.**

Ephesians 2:11-16

“...Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

THE LORD'S TESTAMENTS

The words "The Lord's Testaments", is just another way of saying, "The Lord's Revelations". In this case, there are two principle 'testaments' and or 'revelations', but they are from the same unique God. They are usually called either the Old Testament, or the New Testament.

The Old Testament exists to teach man where Jesus came from and what man had to learn along the long road of history so that man was ready to receive this gift of merciful salvation and the accompanying new covenant. The Old Testament also supplies us with a large part of our knowledge about God Himself. We would not really understand God's love, or God's Fatherhood, or God's jealousy for His people, without the Old Testament's testimony. We would not understand the role of blood sacrifice, nor the necessity of our strict obedience, nor the expansiveness of God's knowledge-presence-wisdom-power without the Old Testament's testimony and explanations. We need the Old Testament still today!

But, the Old Testament laws and rules, all of them, from the beginning, to the Ten Commandments to the intertestamental period, have now been set aside and they are no longer in effect. Full stop: -finished, -completed, -no longer applicable.

This does not mean that the principles which man has had to learn by experiencing the facts of the Old Testament Way are of no value. All of these factors are of the highest value for us today.

The New Testament is the current, and final law code. What it says, it says to all mankind everywhere, every day. We are to pay very close attention to each word found in this testament, and the context in which it is expressed. The New Testament is the story of Jesus and the earliest beginnings of the Church. It is the way we are to go, the way we are to walk, while serving as meekly bold servants of the Lord, still most high. It is of eternal value!

The great changes between these two testaments begins with us seeing the 'road to the cross' that Jesus had to walk, without sinning even once. The gift of mercy and grace to a undeserving world was also of absolutely critical benefit. We could not be the Church without the only plan possible that would answer the questions of justice, love, mercy and faithfulness, without these words of this testament. We must cherish them more than any other words that have ever been written or spoken, for this testament is from God, The Lord. All of these words, and nothing else, are the way that the Lord wants us to live, think and act! Truly, they are "more valuable than gold, yea, than much fine gold." [Psalm 19:9-11]

This inestimable value of the testaments, both of them, is the basis for our devotion to bible study, bible obedience, and the on-going, bible based, building of the church that the Lord wants. It gives us knowledge and focus, along with an assured path to walk, together with our brothers and sisters, as well as the reason why those that walk solo, outside of the church, have it so hard. *[God wants us to be a family, united together, a church, the called-out body who follow Him explicitly. He does not want us to be hermits. Hermits are people, usually with overly strong wills that cannot countenance the rule and authority of God over them, who thus live and suffer and feel alone. God does not want this. The testaments tell us this fact repeatedly.]*

Ephesians 5:15-21

“...Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to [a]one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ...”

THE LORD'S PLAN

In our current times, Christendom is very splintered and divided and stymied in its overall mission. There are many people pulling us all towards this idea or that idea over there, with everyone believing that they are serving in the most proper way of understanding the Lord's plan, given the cultural and domestic issues of the day. Conflicts exist between groups that are close together on most topics but very diverse on some of the basic ones. Confusion reigns in many places, just as the devil delights in seeing but which are the cause of the tears in God's eyes. Not a pretty picture.

However, a great deal of harmony and real peace can be achieved if we would just pay attention to **all** that God has had to say. Some minor digressions would then be made right and some major digressions would then be totally swallowed up in the wisdom of the Lord's way. Oh my, my, my: -if we were but to seek the true "fear of the Lord", as the book of Proverbs tells us. [**Proverbs 1:7**] "**The fear of the Lord is, indeed, the beginning of wisdom.**"

It does take a genius to know that all of mankind, we, -His creatures, the product of the work of His hands, have rebelled, and done so continuously since the heady days back in the garden of Eden. Paul the apostle told the people of Rome to never forget that "...all men...", those with the swords of power and we with the weary feet, "...all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..." [**Romans 3:23**] John echoed this ideas when he stated that "...if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us..." [**1 John 1:8**] The very fact of sin, in each of our lives, is no great surprize, if we are anywhere close to sanity. We know that **we are all sinners.**

Well, if we know we are sinners, what must we do to get this evil reality taken away from our lives? What do we need to do, now? This is a very good set of questions and it must be answered clearly and concisely, by every person who knows that they are in a state of rebellion and separation from God, even those who may hold high offices and positions in the church at large.

So, what do we need to know of the Lord's plan to say those of mankind who would seek His true forgiveness? **First, and foremost, we cannot, and will not, save ourselves.** That is the work and gift of God! Jesus blood is essential to the plan of God and has been so since before the Garden. Without the shedding of the blood of the perfect Lamb of God, there is no forgiveness. [**Hebrews 9:22b / Hebrews 10:9-10 / Romans 6:23 / Romans 7:6 / Romans 8:1**]

Furthermore, Jesus death on the cross at Calvary is still the very center of all of the Lord's plan, for every age, -for those who lived before the cross, and for those who live after the cross. It has always been this way, and it will always be this way.

(Some, by the way that they speak, diminish the role of the cross, and skip over to what we are to do now. This is shameful preaching!! We must never diminish the cross of Christ. Never speak of the Lord's plan without first and foremost, speaking of the necessary role of Jesus and the cross. What we have to do is merely essential, but what He had to do is absolutely primary.)

What then of our part of the 'contract of faith? If He died to save us, do we have anything we must do to avail ourselves of His gracious gift of salvation? The answer to that is yes, we do have things we must do to have the saving blood applied to our lives.

*[We should probably remember at this point what happened back in Egypt when the death angel 'passed over the land: those with blood of the lamb on the door posts were saved, but everyone else, totally everyone else, well they would experience the death of all of the first born in their families. -ask the most powerful man on Earth at that time, Pharaoh, if that hurt...ask him if there was anything that he could have done, would he have done it, had he the opportunity to go back and do it again. **Ask Pharaoh! He lost his first born son, his faith, in his gods, his right to rule Egypt, and his sense of moral superiority by not listening to every word that Moses had to say!!!! Makes one think, doesn't it?**]*

The first thing we must do is to sit down and listen to the full story of Jesus. Some have used the term "**HEARING**" here. It is a good term, by itself, but it needs some of that **SERIOUS THINKING**, on Jesus, on me and my real case, -all done before going any father forward and looking at what may be required of me. So, **HEARING** and **THINKING**, with a very thorough bit of critical **READING OF GOD'S WORD**, go hand in hand, always. in the Lord's plan. It will take some very critical thinking to break free from the things we may have learned before, and a greater degree of courage to follow through with what we have now learned about Jesus and the Lord's Plan.

We do not stop at having heard the whole story of Jesus, God's Son. We do not stop at having really seriously thought about Jesus and His way. We do not stop at being very honestly critical about where we are at right now in the sight of God. We do not stop at thinking about what responding to Him will cost me, every day for the rest of my life. No. We do not stop at any of these little points.

The very next point will require of us our whole heart, body and mind. It is called **BELIEF**. Do I think that Jesus was a real person, who lived a real life on earth, who went about Palestine preaching, and who ended up on a Roman cross, dying there, once, for all people? Do I believe that to be true? Then am I so far gone into this believe that I am willing to let Him be the Lord of my life, my sovereign Lord, Master, and Ruler, controlling me in all things? Am I willing to let go of my safe harbours and go out for Him into the world to be His ambassador, even if it puts my very own life at jeopardy, let alone the lives of my family? Am I willing to so believe in the truth of Jesus as to give up everything for Him? Big ask, -a very big ask.

[John 3:16 / Mark 16:16 / Acts 8:12 / Acts 8:37 / Acts 16:31]

But to simply 'believe that the bus is going to London" is not to actually get to London, if you do not go the second major step of the plan, and that step up on to the bus, is called "**REPENTANCE**". It is a commitment to a change of will, a change of life styles, a change of primary authorities, a change of allegiance, a change of heart, as well as a change of actions. It is also a deep grief for having gone off on my own, of having rebelled, of having sinned. [It was also my own sins that put the nails in His hands.] "I must make a change, now!!!" This is repentance. **[Acts 3:19 / Acts 11:18 / Acts 17:30 / Acts 26:20b / Acts 26:20b]** There is no salvation for those who just come to a mental point and then just casually agree that Jesus was historically here on Earth. That is not what belief is all about. Neither is there any value in taking sin lightly and agreeing that "I am a sinner.", and then following that up with a quick,

“...so what! I do not really care. I like being a sinner and not some boring ‘holly joe’. That is not repentance at all. It does not have the heart felt sorrow for having gone against God in some many ways, on so many occasions. Those types of words are further rebellion and dismissal of God. Remember Pharaoh’s tears.

The third point in the plan is **CONFESSION**. It is both a statement to the public world that “I believe that Jesus is the Son Of God, the only directly begotten one, of God”. But it is also a public statement that says I am willing to be adopted into the family of God, right now, right here. It is thus an acceptance of the “Lordship of Jesus” and a setting aside of the other lord’s of life and that I have followed until this very moment thus making them lesser than this new lord. “HE IS LORD, INDEED: HE IS LORD, ALONE” [**Matthew 10: 32 / Romans 10:9 / I John 2:23 / John 11:27 / Hebrews 10:19-25**]

The next step in the Lord’s plan that I must be involved in is “**BAPTISM**”. This where it can get a bit messed up today, if we listen to many of the various groups who call themselves preachers and pastors, rather than just listening to our new Lord and to His word. Of all the steps we have seen so far this one is different in one crucial way. The others are what I do, but this is one that is done to me.

The actual word “baptism” means to be totally immersed in water. It is not a simple sprinkling of a few drops of water on my head, and, equally, it is not just having some water poured over me. It is a full-on life-time, commitment statement, done in front of the Lord and anyone else who is watching. It is thus a bath, with all of the meaning of that word, a totally washing of my body so that my soul is clean, spiritually speaking. This is what Jesus specifically asked His apostle to preach, and that done pointedly so, in **Mark 16:16**. Jesus said there, “... go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned...” Can we get much more authoritative than the words which came from Jesus own mouth?

Just so we can more perfectly understand this term, ‘baptism’ we need to note that baptism is also described as a burial, according to no less an authority as the apostle Paul. He said in **Romans 6:3-11**, that it is a burial into Jesus death, where we rise anew!!! [**Galatians 3: 27 / I Peter 3:21 / Acts 2:38 / Acts 8: 12-13 / Acts 8: 35-37 / Acts 22:16**] The dead man of sin is totally lowered into the grave, but arises as a new born babe, in Christ: --- “...and the angels rejoice”. [**Luke 15:10**]

If one enters the grave of baptism, if one submits themselves to the washing of baptism, one arises as a member of God’s Family, a member of The Church, and receives from God Himself, the complete forgiveness of their sins. That saved person is now a full fledged saint, a child of God, perfect in the eyes of God the Father.

This is the Lord’s plan of Salvation: Jesus came, Jesus died, Jesus was resurrected, Jesus commissioned all to go out and preach the ideas of hearing, believing, confessing and being baptized into water, as a declaration of my faith and belief. It is really very simple. However, leave it to man to muddy these crystal clear waters with things like *the believers prayer*, something that is never found in scripture in any form, because it will not save you or me. The whole plan is needed, just like we need to read the whole word to know the whole will

of God. Consider that Apollos only knew a part of the plan and had to be more fully taught, and so may we, too. This is where it can get to be very personal, and very confronting: we may have to give up the teachings of the past, just like the Jews had to do, so we can enjoy the fruits of THE LORD'S PLAN.

Let us consider, very briefly the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit", so we may have as clear an understand of 'Saving Baptism' as possible.

- **Water baptism is not the same thing as the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are two different things, and have very different purposes to fulfil.**
- **'Water Baptism' is part of the actual salvation plan, but the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' existed to demonstrate the reality of God to people who need that extra bit of convincing. Miracles were performed as a result of this form of baptism. Today, we can read the completed text of the New Testament to see what God did do in that first century and then allow our faith to grow. We must remember that our faith is not built on what we see and experience, but on what did happen, and then was recorded for all time. Greater is the fact that we have faith than actual physical confirmation of one form or another.**
- **We all are asked to allow ourselves to be baptized in water, because of our faith in Jesus. But. not all of the saved in the first century received the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit', nor did all receive some special gift of the Spirit.**
- **Fact: No one can go to heaven without the saving act of 'Water Baptism', but one can go to heaven without having received the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit'.**
- **Not all of the special gifts of the Spirit will come to everyone who receives the 'Baptism of the Spirit', but everyone who is baptized in water will receive the same gift of the Holy Spirit, even yet today. This same gift, which is different, and much more precious than the other gifts, being both the gift of God's indwelling Spirit and that individual's salvation, is promised to ever convert to the faith.**
- **The Holy Spirit does not need us today to speak in 'tongues' as they needed to do in the first century of Church history. We must look to what is actually seen here and now, in front of us, to better understand the present workings of the Spirit.**
- **NOTE: There are special cases where salvation was granted without the necessary act of baptism by water, but these extra-ordinary cases are under the control and wisdom of God. We cannot reject baptism off of the account of the thief on the cross. That case, was extra-ordinary. God knows when to apply His prerogative of mercy in these extra-ordinary situations. We are thus to preach, as Jesus Himself commanded us, the necessity of water - salvation baptism, always.**

Finally, we need to recognize that salvation, and the plan that has been in the preparation for so long, is based on the work of Jesus on the cross. The keeping of laws, any laws, will never be able to save any man. That is the great fact that we as the Lord's people are charged with telling to the rest of the world.

There are lots of statements in the bible that this. One of those passages is **Ephesians 2:8**, which says, "...He made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved..." There are many parts to the larger formula and they are all the "You were saved by passages..." All of them are required if we wish to have one complete, and whole, picture of the Lord's plan.

Acts 4:12	"...no other name by which we are saved... / ...by <u>the name of Jesus</u> "
Acts 16:30-31	"... <u>believe</u> and you will be saved..."
Acts 2:21	"...everyone who <u>calls on the name</u> will be saved..."
Mark 16:16	"...whoever <u>believes</u> and is <u>baptized</u> will be saved..."
Acts 13:47	"... <u>evangelism</u> /telling the world, brings salvation..."
Ephesians 2:8	"...saved by the <u>gifting of God's grace</u> ..."
Titus 3:5	"...saved by the <u>washing of the new birth</u> ..."
Acts 16:30-31	"...you are saved by <u>belief</u> ..."
I Peter 3:21	"... <u>baptism</u> saves you..."
Romans 8:24	"...you are saved by <u>hope</u> ..."
Romans 10:9	"...you are saved by <u>confession</u> ..."
Romans 10:9-10	"...you are saved by <u>prayer</u> "
Jeremiah 3:22-23	"...you are saved by <u>returning to God</u> ..."
Isaiah 45:22	"...you are saved by <u>trust</u> ..."
Acts 20:21	"...you are saved by <u>repentance</u> ..."
Isaiah 25:9	"...you are saved by <u>waiting</u> ..."
Isaiah 25:9	"...you are saved <u>by the Lord</u> ..."
I Corinthians 15:1-4	"...you are saved <u>by the gospel</u> ..."

The phrase, "...you are saved by..." is thus seen to be very big in scope. There are other things which we could add to this list, but these will suffice to say that the 'plan' is much bigger than any one, singular, part. This the principle reason that the "prayer of faith" is a false concept. no singular prayer can, or will, contain all of these elements. Some are on-going: some are one time occurring. ---But they are all part of one plan, and one solitary plan only.

The plan, like Church, is not a case of going into the 'religious shop' and finding the one that you like best. That and those who preach it are actually servants of Satan, being as false as can possibly be. How can we assume to reduce the great plan of God, The Lord, down off of our own will and our own wants and wishes for numbers?How? ---If we assume in even the littlest of matters to be smarter and more culturally aware than God, or to assume that He does not care, we are hypocrites and infidels. Even the angels would not presume to act in such a degrading way towards God, The Lord.

John 3:16

“...for God so loved the world, that He gave His [a]only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life...”

Ephesians 2:7-8

*“...so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is **the gift of God...**”*

THE LORD'S GIFTING

LOVE - GRACE - MERCY

The gift which our Lord gives us, freely, are precious beyond estimation! They are many in number and we get to experience His continuing 'giving' nature every day of our lives. This is something that draws us to church to celebrate and praise His holy name, every week, like clock-work! Sunday is the day we look forward to all the rest of the week long, We start out our week, the first day of the week, just like the first century church, by celebrating the fact of our God and those gifts He has shared with us all.

Lets start with the evaluation, the assigning of value to these three specific gifts. They all are priceless, way beyond imagination, and they all lead to an eternity with The Lord, Himself. No one can ask for greater gifts than these three, no matter what we have done in the past.

The first of these is '**love**'. In John 3:16 we have one of the most famous passages in all of the bible. It says that God, so loves, present continuous action, that He gave us the gift of His only son so that we might have an eternal future with Him. That is very good, indeed. Nothing to do here but explain that a gift is not something one earns, but it is a presentation without having to work for the gift itself. Unlike the story of Isaac and his two wives, we do not have to go out and earn this gift of love by our repeatedly good actions. It is ours for the sake of simple compliance, like the presentation of you bank card at the bank, to get the gift of a birthday cheque entered into your account. If you never present the cheque, you never get the benefit of the cheque. If you never present your bankcard you get 'zilch' from the bank teller, and maybe a simile, but no gift.

The value of the cheque remains the same. The process of cashing the cheque remains in force as well. No one works for a gift: it is freely given and gratefully accepted. The gift of Jesus, does require the presentation of our "eternal bank card", just as The Lord has requested. This like the two Greek words for work: one means to work as in earn because of continuous labour, and the other means to move something through space. One is an accounting term, 'earn': one is a physic term, 'to move along through space'. Both are translated as the word 'work', but they are very different indeed. |

The 'love of God' is thus unconditional, --- it is always totally unconditional. This is a stumbling block for many today. That clause of being unconditional seems to say to some that if one gets baptized, then that is some form of having to earn salvation by working for it., and that defeats the free-unconditional definition. This is but a confusion of the two, very distinctly different, Greek words: "kerdison", "to earn", and "metakinesete", to move an object through space, or simply to perform an opening motion.

Jesus used the story of the prodigal son to teach that this wayward child was received back at home, after having done all he could to destroy his inheritance. He was unworthy. He had not earned his father's love or respect. But, the love of the father was so great, that he rejoiced, killed the fatted calf and put a ringbone his son's finger. The gifts of the father would

not have been granted, if the son had not come home. For us today, we too face the same basic problem of coming home to God. If we do not choose to come home, if we do not accept the challenge of coming home, if we do not open the gate, and then if we do not seek an audience with The Father, The Lord, we will not receive salvation. This where the plan of salvation comes in. The plan of salvation is how God wants us to respond to His love.

Following on to the gift of love is the gift of 'grace'. Now, this gift of God is just as special as The Lord's love. It too is priceless. Yet of these three great gifts it is the most misunderstood of the three. The misunderstanding is in what it actually is. It is not 'unmerited favour' and yet it is 'totally unmerited', and it is 'The Lord's favour'.

"Grace" is the freedom to grow, at our own pace of understanding. "Grace" is the latitude we need when we do not quite come up to expectations. "Grace" is time, and help, and an understanding of one who has been tempted in everything that tempts us, but without having ever sinned even once. "Grace" is a compelling force that pulls us ever forward towards a greater and greater appreciation, and application within our lives of all that The Lord has given us. "grace" is counting our blessings, every one of them. "Grace" is knowing that the Lord will always look upon us with a given predisposition to being merciful and not leaving us in the position we so richly deserve as sinners. "Grace" is the act of guidance into deeper understanding of God and what He wants from mankind.

"Grace" is not, however, a license to just go out and sin all the more knowing that we will be forgiven in the end! Paul made this point very clear when said, "...may we go on sinning that grace will abound all the more? May it never be!!!!" **[Romans 6:14-16]**

So, we are to try, as hard as we can, to love, and to encourage ourselves and the whole church to better and better efforts within The Lord's church. This is where God's teaching and guidance really comes in to the picture, when it is married to person's heart, body and soul, when we respond to His love and grace as just a natural state of affairs. It is very much like how a person is to love and think of their mate, husband or wife, seeking to do that which truly pleases them. It is a great marriage when this happens and it is an even better Christian lifestyle to follow.

"Grace" is also not a legal exercise. We are to know the words of God. We are to follow the words of God. We are to teach to others, especially our own families, the words of God. But, and this is crucial, we are to do so because of the motivations of our love for God, and not as the way of some organized pathway of earning. "Grace" is free from all concepts of earning, even though there are tasks we are asked to do. This 'grace' is the gift of God, The Lord. It is His way. [Legalism, the believe and faith in having kept all of the laws perfectly, was the down fall of the rich young ruler. **[Mark 10:17-27]**

That young ruler had missed the very point of the entire Old Testament because he was trusting in his own perfection and not that of The Lord's real perfection. No one can earn their own salvation from the false plan of trying to be perfect in their own right. Oh, we need to obey, and obey, and obey, -but salvation can only be based on Jesus and His perfection. Those that preach the monotonous message, of 'Just preach what is in the bible" are, more often than not, following a legalistic platform and are running the risk of being lost, eternally.

We need practical application as much as we need scripture!!! We need to look at how Jesus dealt with the pharisaic minds of His day and do likewise!!! For us today, this is the application of 'grace', where we too give others the needed right of just growing up.

The last of the three great gifts is "**mercy**". 'Mercy' is not getting what we deserve. The term 'gospel' mirrors this very appropriately. The gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, is that for all of us, condemned to eternal capital punishment, we have just received a reprieve from that sentence of being cast out of God's presence for ever. Just the thought that we cannot experience the joy of His presence is hellish, at he least. To know that this sentence, which we justly deserve, has been revoked and that we will not face the proverbial 'axe', should bring out of us such a sign of relief and joy that the sky above us can never contain the sound. That is the experience of having received God's mercy. Mercy, you see, is freedom from "The Sentence".

Now that we are once more free, by the factor of Jesus death on the cross, it calls from me my joy, my allegiance, my desire to please and ever thank Him. This the fruit of mercy, and the lifestyle definition from now on I am His to command!!

To better understand this 'pardon' that I have received at the death of Jesus, done as the Hebrews writer tells us, once for all, I have to look at how 'I' forgive. 'I' forgive by tentatively granting a reprieve from my anger and disgust, most often. However, I also have not restored trust like it once existed. In the case of the Lord's merciful forgiveness, however, He forgives totally. There are not even the hidden marks of the erasures pressure as it is applied to paper to show where I was ever in a state of continued rebellion. That total cleansing of the slate is what the Lord's merciful forgiveness is like: totally clean, totally forgive, as if nothing had ever been wrong, with all trust restored to a pristine and fully pure state.

"Mercy" is also a return to full fellowship, as if nothing had ever happened. This can be very disturbing to some who do not see the full pressure of recompense being extracted. These people want to see their 'pound of flesh', for the sins committed. They, wisely, suggest that the sinner not be put into a position where they are tempted to sin in like manner again. In the case of the national laws, this has some good merit behind its thinking.

We are not the national courts, nor are we rarely called on to have to deal with this level of concern. We are called on to deal with the question of moral slippage, of emotional uncontrol, of mistaken paths and of wrong decisions. This are not the concern, normally, of the courts of the land. When the courts of the land do come into the case, we need respect their right to judge the case, as the laws demand, and their decisions. There are some repercussions for sinful behaviour on the level of the national courts, and some on the level of dealing with the specifics of the congregational level. "Mercy" is never free from the repercussion of men's trust, in all cases, for instance, The wisdom of the Lord's way, is to counsel, 'Go and sin no more' like Jesus did with woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. It just may take time, but that is what grace and love are for.have you too wondered what He wrote there in the sand?

John 4:23-25

“... a time is coming, and has now come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” ²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us....”

THE LORD'S WORSHIP

Worship is, by the very definition of the word itself, an action that is designed to assign and maintain a sense of supreme worth. If we worship the local football club, we are saying that they, above all other clubs, are the best and they command my total allegiance. The same is true, but even more so, when we come to the act of religious worship: "My God, and His Way, is the only right way." It is proper to understand everything from the perspective of the superior of my 'worship focus' from my acceptance of The Lord God as the one and only God, the revelatory of all divine truth, and the Gather of all the truly faithful. -----That is what the word means.

Because of this definition then, whatever The Lord says is perfect and necessary, absolutely. This is a natural follow-on to our according Him the highest of all honours. Thus, if this Supreme Head, this Lord, has anything then that He wants us to do, we need to heed Him and just do it, -His way, -all the way. No short cuts and no substitutions are allowed, because they then run the risk of demoting 'My God' into a lesser role.

Fortunately for us, our great sovereign, The Lord, has given to us some glimpses of what worship factors He would like to see in our worship. He has allowed us to see the first century church in action. It is both a picture of a whole week's devotion to God, and a set of specifics when we bow down before Him on Sunday, the day set aside for worship.

The specific items of Sunday worship are, first, **prayer**; second is **singing**, with third being **The Lord's Supper**, which is also called 'communion', and fourth is **a period of edification** through a bible study of some form and purpose. These four elements are seen in the New Testament as worship, most certainly. But there are some other elements as well, such as encouragement, fellowship, renewal of commitment, and a feeding of my own soul through devotional thinking, and especially that of **praise**. All of these are part of true worship. As one can see, it is very much a community event and time, done through a spirit of joy. True worship is not an ecstatic set of experiences: it is a deep **faith in God sharing** time.

But not always are we able to meet with the saints and share our hearts and our love with the brethren. Sometimes, we are alone, or having to work a shift, or one of the kids is sick, - or I might even be sick myself. It is in the things of this nature, which cannot be avoided, that we can experience God on a private level. During these private moments, we still need to keep our minds and our hearts focused on God, and not on entertainments. All throughout the times of our worship, we have to remember that we are still the Lord's Ambassadors. This is a very heady moment, this moment of worship, and deserves our best mind and heart.

We will look at the prime individual parts of Sunday worship in the next series of heading. This is so, so that we end up doing things the way the Lord wants, and not to just please myself. Those that worship to please their own rhythms, and prejudices, are not right with God, at all. This thing called worship" is to praise His name and to lift it high. It is a wonderful thing really and if we are 'giving of our all', we too will be blessed knowing we have submitted to GOD, for **He alone is worthy**.

ACTS 20:7

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

THE LORD'S MEMORIAL SUPPER

Memories are things that require a continuous process of being fuelled and polished. They are temporary, especially when they begin to cross generational lines. We would probably never remember the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, were it not for everyone being called to stop and remember those who went to war so that we would have freedom today. Here in Australia, the veterans get out and parade proudly down the middle of the street: some in wheel chairs, some riding in jeeps, some merely walking and the ones that are still able are there marching. Why? So, that the pledge we have made to the fallen is kept ever true: "Lest We Forget".

The same is true of our going to church on Sunday to participate in the Lord's Supper, that simple few minutes where we take unleavened bread, some fruit of the vine and remember Jesus, who instituted the memorial, who will be taking it again with all of the saints when He returns again. [Luke 22:14-23]*"Lest We Too Forget"*

This supper is then very special and we try to follow as closely as it is possible to the exact supper which Jesus instituted. First, because this was the Passover time, unleavened bread is used. This is to represent the change of covenants which we are able to enjoy now, free from legalism and self-dependence for our salvation. [I Corinthians 11: 23-29]. Second, the fruit of the vine is served. This is to represent the washing of our souls brilliantly clean by the shedding of Jesus' blood for us. [I Corinthians 11: 23-29]. In both of these two section of the supper, we are doing it in remembrance of Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, who died that we might have our sins cleansed from the record. Together, these two form the basis of what we call 'communion'.

Anything that as the prefix 'comm...' on it is celebrating an act of common grounds, via a fully common communication cycle. Thus, we are telling God, pledging ourselves that this week we will remember Jesus and His death. We are also committing ourselves to living out our lives in a manner that will bring honour to His name. The Lord is telling us that all is still going along as it is supposed to, drawing nearer each day to His return. We both parties to this new covenant having expressed themselves, we carry on living our pledges, all week long.

We have chosen to make this 'two way common-union' a weekly statement as they also did in the New Testament period and which is most clearly stated by Justin Martyr in the second century. It is not expressly stated that we must do this, but it was the first centuries custom. We merely follow their historical lead, as an act of ongoing-self-discipline. The communion, the supper, the Eucharist, the feast of memory is an act of mere discipleship done from a simple motive, that of memory. It is never, ever, a ticket punching short stop on the week's activities, so we get to go on a bit farther towards heaven – that is not on the agenda at all. [By the way, the collection is also just a simple exercise in basic discipline, a part of another two-way communication cycle between God and His child.]

COLOSSIANS 4:2-3

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

THE LORD'S "PRAYERS"

"Prayer" is, by definition, a presentation of a heart and its desires **to God** above. It is an expectation of a **two-way dialogue**, between man, the servant, and God, the sovereign. It is, always, a recognition that the praying individual is coming before the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving creator of the universe. **Abject humility** is thus the emotion of the day.

Jesus gave us "The Lord's Prayer" in **Matthew 6:5-15**, and amplified in **Matthew 7:7-27**. This is not some special mantra that is to be chanted, repeatedly, by the one doing the praying. It is a training tool, and that is a very significant part of its original purpose. Following closely on this training strategy, is the proper attitude to be found in real prayer, for prayer is never to be just a wish list, made repeatedly.

Prayer is also never to be a command we give to God, expecting Him to answer straight away because His child commands it. There is no humility in that concept, at all, and prayer must be filled to the brim with real humility, heart, pleading special cases, and the praise of God, in the Highest. Prayer is the 'lesser' calling on the 'greater' for help, with the heart of a true servant. It is never to be seen as just a rote set of words, duly memorized and repeated. [For this reason, if for no other, more care should be taken in nominating men to pray in public. They must be like the publican, and not like the Pharisee, as these two very different attitudes towards are described in **Luke 18:9-14**. Recognition of one's place before God is essential to all good prayer life, and thus all real spirituality.

Have you ever noticed that those who think they are "spiritual" are not spiritual at all, but are clowns, dressed in full costume, pretending to be before God with all of false bravado that denotes them as clowns? They have their special times for prayer, special postures for prayer, special places to go and to pray, often some form of actual closets, -and there is nothing wrong with these things-, but the emphasis is in the keeping of the time, with the form always outweighing the reality of its humility. They like saying 'spiritual things', but their heart is a bit shy of true. They, like all of us, must learn the discipline of prayer, and not concentrate on just the appearance of some form of legalized mockery of God.

The praying person does still recognize the over-immense power of God: He can do anything, still. In fact, "God can do more than we even think or imagine." [**Ephesians 3:16-21**] Note: this must be understood from the perspective that says that God has retained the right and the wisdom to know when to apply it, of saying "No!". He is "God", and not the "Great Tooth Fairy" of the fables in our mind.

A very good organizational tool for a prayer can be, if the situation lends itself to this, of "adoration-confession-thanks giving-supplication for others": or "A-C-T-S". A much higher degree of praise must come to typify our prayer lives than just the very common type of prayer where supplication is the dominant attribute, and that done from a heart position where we look down on God, rather than one where we look up to God, the king. Give to Him the honour He truly deserves!!

There are lots of significant questions that might come to mind, once we handle the humility and praise question, in our own lives. These questions are, “Who is to pray?” , “Who is to lead in public prayers?”, and “Does every prayer have to have an ‘amen’ at the close, with eyes shut and hands folded in the typical prayer mode?”

Let us take on first, the difficult one for today’s culture, “**Who is to pray?**” To begin our answer, we must note that everyone is to pray: men and women, young and old, short and tall, –everyone! But, and this is where it gets a bit controversial to some people, given the nature of the feminism movement, and the pursuit of full equality with men. But, and but is such a big word, *but* not everyone is to lead the congregation in prayer in the public worship service. That role of public prayer is reserved for the males among us, and not all of them. However, this is not to say that women are inferior to men, in any spiritual way at all. Women have a set of gender specific roles to uphold in regard to prayer and so do the men. They are different, one from the other, but they are quite separate and unique, one from the other.

One is the vocalization of our cares and concerns (done by the men), and thus their close-built knowledge of those cares and concerns. This will often require the input of the women in their lives and in the circumstances, take have occurred to raise the need for that prayer. It takes some pre-prayer thought and some well-chosen words that all can hear. That takes a more powerful voice on the norm.

The second is both an observed role, and an on-going one, of demonstration. It is to be focused on the teaching full submission to the family, and the observers near-by at the moment of prayer. This is crucial for setting the solemnity, and tenor, of the prayer session.

It is also one where the women, to whom this role is given first, have the added responsibility, naturally, of giving the amen at the end, so that everyone will know that this prayer has the full and heart felt support of all of the audience. (This last role is shared between men and women, equally, and it does need to be done in a mood that is in keeping with the general tone of the whole public prayer. The woman, naturally is the first ‘teacher’ of the family’s children.

*[This ‘submission-teaching’ control role does not mean, at all, that we all are to be observed by the women so as to ensure that everyone is complying with all the forms, postures, and seriousness of the moment. That would negate her own submission requirements, because she too is to be focused on listening to the prayer being offered and voicing her approval and agreement with her amen. (The saying of the ‘amen’ means the one saying that one simple word is really saying, to God and her fellow worshippers’, “**Yes, Lord. I agree, heartily.**)]*

Some of the passages for this topic are contained in the following verses, all written by Paul who instructed us all to read so that we may better understand what **THE LORD’S WAY** is to look like, after all this is the primary duty, to ‘love’ the Lord and to do things His way, -not my way and not from my wilful rejection of **HIS WAY**: **I Corinthians 14: 26b, I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:9-12, Titus 3:10-11, Ephesians 1:22.**

The next question we must answer, in brief, is “**Who is to lead in public prayers and worship?**” Again, this same set of scriptures just given, gives this role to the men of the church, where and when both sexes are present. Where it is just women present, it is okay for a woman to do the leading of the prayer, and of the lesson, and of the other ministry obligations. That is our understanding and our custom.

The third great question is “**Does every prayer have to finish with an “amen”?**” Prayer is not like writing a letter and then having to put a postage stamp on it to get it started on its way to the recipient. It is not ‘form specific’ in that way at all. However, there is nothing wrong, in any shape of thinking, with adding the “amen” as a voice of hearty approval, if even by the one praying themselves.

The fourth great question is, “**In what language are we to use, as we pray, in public or private situations?**” The answer is, at first review, a very simple one. God is God, more powerful than any language. God is **bi-lingual**: God is **omni-lingual**. He speaks and understands all languages, fluently! He even understands hearts that are at a loss for words! That is simple and straight forward all by itself. So, in groups where more than one language is common to all, it is best to pray with an interpreter, ...probably. However, there is no passage that demands this, explicitly. It is just good sense to follow the pattern established by Paul in the First Corinthian letter and in his first letter to Timothy.

What of “angelic languages”, and or “heaven languages”, that some claim to have been gifted with the ability to speak, from the Holy Spirit,?” We firmly believe that the ‘pray with the understanding’ idea is still in force. If no one else in the room is able to interpret, then we are better off to leave such prayers alone and not do them. Because **no verification is really possible**, with such prayers, it is very doubtful that such a gifting even exists today – The Holy Spirit just does not work that way. The individual person is the one that is actually glorified, and that at the expense of God, in all cases of ‘holy-spirit-speak’. No one else, no matter what is claimed, is actually benefited by the example of this type of unintelligible speech. If a person wishes to speak for God’s way, to the church, it is best just to do it in the clear and present language that the congregation speaks. There is no rule against clear speech at all !!

The fifth great question is, “**Do we need a special room in which to pray**”? There is the statement that says, ‘When you pray, go into your closet, get off by yourself, and just talk to God.’ In the Berean Study Bible, **Matthew 6:5-6**, the text, expanded as it is, says, “...when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their reward. **But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.** 7And when you pray, **do not babble on like pagans**, for they think that by their many words they will be heard....” This is very good advice, and very good commentary. [Contrary to advertisement, the movie, “The War Room” was not made by God. It is not required gospel, even though they do use a special room and there is nothing wrong with that. It is not even a good rule for the designing of our commitment statements. → *Aside: Be careful of not doing anything that makes you look more like a Pentecostal, or a catholic that you intend to do, for you are to be first Christian and not first a Pentecostal, according to **THE LORD’S WAY**.*]

I Corinthians 14:15

“...I will pray with the spirit and I shall sing with the spirit also...”

II John :9-11

“... Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds...”

THE LORD'S MUSIC

The whole question over the usage, or non-usage, of instruments in worship comes down to two different ways of asking the same thing. It is either “Why we do not use them?” or “Why we do use them?”. Is it really one of ‘simple scripture’. Is it a scriptural command; -on the order of baptism, prayer, the Lord’s Supper and fellowship? Or is it something else.

Indeed, we may struggle with the question, “Is it a full on necessary part of the salvation process?”, is an often-asked question. Many people struggle with it, today. It deserves a good up-to-date answer. But, the answer may be very different from what we currently think, and or, what we have currently been taught by our heroes in the faith. or, could it be something totally different from their teachings?

One serious possibility is that this whole problem is more along the line of an individual being wrapped up in a case of higher form of training, so as to actually assist a person to rise to the level of being in submission to “God’s will” and thus learning to set aside “My will”, “and My Wants”, for the sake of the bigger act of drawing nearer to God as an obedient steward? The biggest problem in this music question is then “Who is the Lord that I follow: is it me, and my appetite, or is it Him, and His parenting of His children? Who is the conductor and who is the member of the orchestra? Who is Father, and who is child? We may call Him Father, or we may even call out the name of Jesus, or we may just be doing ‘our will’ under His name, and thus without His permission, to further our desires and our perspectives.

In reviewing this topic, for many people the argument for the usage of the instrument is basically for the personal enjoyment of the individual person and their own particular musical tastes. They may like the beat, the harmony, and the fullest of sounds, possible. They may like the interweaving of sounds to create a harmonious whole. For whatever is their original reason, to them it has never been a theological question. It is a ‘spirit-of-the-moment’ question, and what sounds best. They tend to like the ‘spirit’ of the event to be as exciting as possible. Thus, they frequently come to worship to be personally lifted up, and not to focus on lifting others up, -if the truth be told. Sadly, the entertainment value is high for them, but the actual worship value is much lower because of this need to feel the ‘spirit’.

What then is the real purpose of music, in any form: is it worship, giving to others, or is it just entertainment? “Very big question, this is.”, as Yoda would say. Those that choose the yes side of the board, the one that favours entertainment, it is these who favour the usage of musical instruments, and they do so thinking that they are truly right with God. Why? Well basically it is because they believe that ‘God’ would not be so small as to limit the church in this manner, and besides, they add, He did allow it in the Old Testament. They are honest, sincere, and committed. It is where their study methods let them down, just as it is back in the garden of Eden when the serpent confronted poor old Eve. How big a mess we make when we neglect the best study methods possible.

What we have here is not pure bible study, nor is it liberalism, but it is just another side, actually, to conservatism, with a different view of God and His role, where the role of the hero, or our preconceived conclusions, become more important than the actual text.

In the question before us, we need to first review our understanding of who, and what, “God” actually is. Our view of God is then the primary battleground upon which these two sides on the music question oppose each other. The question we should now be asking ourselves is, “What view of God should we favour, individually?” The vast number of people in the pews every Sunday have never really thought much about ‘God’, and those rhythmic rhymes we learned in Sunday School ourselves. We must get people to think about God! Who is He? What is He? Who is sovereign and who is servant? What has He said and what has he not said, and why, are very parts of the improved study method.

We also must do some honest bible study on the question itself. Where do we start to do that? At the beginnings, of course, and what is actually said on the subject. Let us start with some simple insights into what we all already agree on, ‘singing’.

Is the bible silent on “Singing”. The answer is obviously, no. The bible, the Old Testament in particular, is not silent on simple singing, at all.

The Old Testament does say,

Psalm 33:1-3

Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.

Psalm 96:1-2

Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.

Psalm 5:11

But let all who take refuge in You be glad. **Let them ever sing for joy**; And may You shelter them, -that those who love Your name may exult in You.

Psalm 9:11

Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds

Obviously, pure, simple, singing is something that pleases God in the Old Testament!

Other things are said here, yes, -but the singular point that is made by these passages is that singing is something the Lord likes. The instrument is even mentioned in some of these passages, but always it is in subjection to the simple act of singing.

However, when we come to the New Testament, the only point to carry over is just ‘simple singing’. The instrument is dropped as an accompaniment to the voice, totally? Why? That seems rather odd. WHY? What could possibly be the reason for this more prescribed bit of inspiration

Before we answer that question, let's note these the Old Testament statements, -just to be fair.

[Psalm 30:4](#)

[Psalm 47:6](#)

[Psalm 68:4](#)

[Psalm 81:1-2](#)

[Psalm 95:1](#)

[Psalm 98:1](#)

[Psalm 117:1](#)

[Psalm 147:7](#)

[Psalm 149:1](#)

[Isaiah 44:23](#)

[Isaiah 49:13](#)

[Isaiah 52:9](#)

[Psalm 104:33](#)

[Psalm 7:17](#)

[Psalm 9:2](#)

[Psalm 13:6](#)

[Psalm 57:8-9](#)

[Psalm 59:16-17](#)

[Psalm 89:1](#)

[Psalm 101:1](#)

[Psalm 147:1](#)

[Isaiah 35:10](#)

[Psalm 18:47-49](#)

[Psalm 71:22-24](#)

In the New Testament it says, pointedly, that singing is a natural thing for Christians to do. It is good and helpful. It too pleases God, if we engage in it, personally and fervently.

[Revelation 5:11-14](#)

Then I heard the voices of many angels, the four living creatures, and the leaders surrounding the throne. -They numbered ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands times thousands. In a loud voice they were **singing**, “The lamb who was slain deserves to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and praise.” -I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and on the sea. Every creature in those places was **singing**, -“To the one who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise, honour, glory, and power forever and ever. ---”The four living creatures said, “Amen!” Then the leaders bowed and worshiped.

[James 5:13](#)

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray Is anyone cheerful? He is to **sing** praises.

[Matthew 26:30](#)

After **singing a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

[Mark 14:26](#)

After **singing a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

[Acts 16:25](#)

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing hymns of praise** to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

[Colossians 3:16](#)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

[Ephesians 5:19](#)

...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

[James 5:13](#)

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to **sing praises**.

When a parent, such as God the Father, repeatedly tells His child, -us-, that we are to “sing”, it is because that good parent is emphasizing that primary attribute which the child is to obey, now, over all other options and or additions, and or concepts! The principle, established in **Galatians 1:6-7**, that there be “no deviations and no distortions” which are ever going to be acceptable, is thus applied in this case too. If the father says ‘sing’, -this often, -and in these various ways, it may just be, that that is exactly what He means, in the strongest of senses.

Historically, we know that all Christians accepted this fact of acapella singing, (*singing without the instrument*), for the first 650 years of church history. That is a long time: it lasted up until the reign of the Catholic Pope Vitalian, who said it was okay, but only in very special circumstances. But even then, it was not common at all until the 1700's, another 650 years, and countless religious wars. However, it began to be seen more commonly at that time, that a 'church' might employ an instrument., otherwise, no first or second, or third, or fourth, or sixth century church, would even allow the idea of replacing, and or accompanying the song service, with musical instruments. Most other, smaller groups, than the big cathedrals could not even afford the cost of an instrument, but it was the power of that original tradition that drove their practice of acapella music, -not finances, -and definitely not entertainment.

In the years after the 1700's and the various religious wars in Europe, the people sought their "freedom" and their "rights" as they perceived them. They did so in all sorts of areas: -some were political, some were philosophical, and much more were of a theological nature. Regardless of what was said in defence of the right of to use the instrument, it was this "right of our freedom" that prevailed. It produced a lot of movements in the church at large. Rather than going back to the ideas of our teachers and our heroes, rather than getting all wrapped up in these various movements and their conflicting theologies; **let's just do what we know is right, and that without question. It is "simply sing", from the heart, to lift all of the others up, and to simply praise God in the fullest manner, filled with joy, praise, and devotion to our supreme Lord and Master. It is definitely well spoken of in the bible.**

So, we have chosen to do just that, simply singing. It is the Lord's music after all.

MATTHEW 10:28

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell...”

HEBREWS 10:31

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD !!!

THE LORD'S RETURN: **REWARDS AND RECOMPENSE**

We believe that Jesus will return to this earth one final time. We believe that at that time He will bring judgement on all the world and all the people who have ever lived, from the days of the garden until the moment of the final trumpet. Some will be exonerated and blessed, but some will be condemned and punished, with each set being for all eternity. It is a big faith, I know, but it is what we believe and for which we serve, every day, all day long, as good and proper servants of the way of the Lord. Big faith, bigger hope, and the biggest rewards possible await the blessed. The condemned await an eternity away from God, hope, reprieve, or the possibility of pardon.

The picture we have of heaven is found in the book of Revelation. It is here that we find a truly magnificent portrait of what heaven will look like, in words that we mortals can understand. Because it is beyond the dimension of time and space, we are limited to those experiences we can imagine, both for heaven, and for hell.

Mankind just cannot get beyond his level of experiences in seeing anything, until it becomes the new reality. It will come. On that we rest assured and confident. There will be a heaven and there will be a hell. **[Revelation 21:10-27]** **[Matthew 13:50]**

There will be a judgement, as well as a 'final' destination. When Jesus returns, He will supervise the division of the sheep and the goats. **[Matthew 25:31-46]** The sheep who follow Him to one side, and the goats who go their own solitary ways, to the other side.

When will this happen? No one knows when it will happen, we only believe that it will happen when the Lord says it is time for it to happen.

Who will get to be on the 'sheep' side? Those who do the will of God and thus receive His eternal grace. But will that not mean that lots of well-meaning people might be "goat-sided"? The answer is yes. Jesus said that not everyone who claims to be a disciple is really a disciple. But what of those who have 'preached the Jesus message all their lives? Jesus said that not all of those who say, "Lord", "Lord" are really right with the Lord. They may say, Lord, lord" but they do everything they want to do but just use His name as a cover, to conceal their selfishness and sinfulness. These 'false-preachers' only serve themselves, often saying that they are waiting on a direct command from God to go to work. ---He already has given that command but they do not want to get up and do it. **[Matthew 7:21]**

THE FULL CIRCLE HAS NOW BEEN MADE, FROM THE "FEAR OF THE LORD" TO THE "REWARDS OF THE LORD."

I PETER 5:8 ESV

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

THE LORD'S OPPONENT: **SATAN**

The existence, or non-existence, of the devil is a problem for some people. They either disbelieve totally in the devil and his active chase of the people of God, or else they are so scared of him that they go way out of the way to avoid what they see as 'any appearance of evil, thus becoming hermits and or social outcasts. We believe that the devil exists and that he is active in opposing all people who belong to God and who follow the Lord's Way. In Peter's first letter, he says, "*...Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour...*" This is not a bit of fiction that Peter is writing, like the story of the 'Wolf and Red Riding-hood', nor is it a bit of illustration used to scare the more impressionable fellows among us. It is simply fact. [**I Peter 5:8**]

We are one of the targets of this 'lion'. This requires that we be alert, careful, and wise. The devil wants our souls, and he has a lot of tools, and ways to use them, that can rob us of heaven. He is the opponent of all Christians, and of God, Himself! When we sin, we do because we choose to do so and thus the blame is on us, personally. But, the devil is positioning things that will tempt us into an act of sin, just as he did with Eve, back in the garden. He is the 'father of lies', and is very skilful in using only enough truth so as to lull the victim into a false sense of ease, which when exploited and then experienced, becomes a full-on act of rebellion from God, The Lord. When we choose to fall, and we do choose to fall, knowingly and or unknowingly, we become part of his 'team', and doors to more sins just keep on opening up and swallowing us, yet again. [**John 8:44**]

Everything that can be called wrong', is sin. Only one man has lived a perfectly sin-free life, even though He was tempted in all things, just like us. His name is "Jesus", and He is the one who died to release us from the curse of sin, and the punishment we so richly deserve for openly rebelling against God, Almighty. God has reserved a place for the rebels among us. It is called 'Hell'. [**Matthew 25:41**]

Yes, this place called 'hell' exists. It too is real. It is for the devil, and it is for his 'angels'. Now the word 'angel', in Greek, most often means messenger, or fellow advocate. If we become vile enough in spirit and mind, we can become one of the devils messengers ourselves. This word, 'angel', can also mean a being who exists outside of this world normalcy, -most of the time. There are good angels and there are bad angels, by the way.

Rebellion, the following of the number one rebel leader has a punishment attached of eternal, time not remitting, torment. For having so treated God with contempt and disregard, this is not too small a thing at all. It is not simple annihilation, nor is it a slap on the wrist. It too is real, it is for eternity, and it is pain filled. (Remember that when Adam and Eve sinned, they were thrown out of the pain-free garden, into a world with thorns, sharp cutting stones, and mosquitos. It required that man work until he dropped: there was no respite and no molly-coddling at all. You will notice that that sentence is still on-going, even though Jesus has come and freed us from the burden of pain. The sloth and laziness that we can slip into, is

sin, and thus a ticket to Hell. **“Be careful, work hard and serve the Lord with a truly boiling spirit”** was Paul admonition. It was a good one that we need to put into the living of our lives. [**Romans 12:11** from the Simple English Translation] , for it is in this way only will we stay on the Lord’s side and oppose God’s primary opponent, Satan, who once was a heavenly angel himself, but got thrown out, eternally, from opposing God’s total and absolute sovereignty. Such is still the price of rebellion, so that the appreciation of heaven will be even greater, but more so for the justice side of things, and thus for the full evilness of sin be understood, without any doubt. [**Revelation 12: 7-13**]

Most people in the world who claim any relationship, whatsoever, see the devil as an all red demon, sitting on a throne in the middle of a burning furnace. While this picture is very graphic, it does not come from an actual quote from the bible. It is a literary invention of Dante Alighieri, from the Italian Renaissance period. It is from his book “L’Inferno”, and was intended to portray the devil in all of his awfulness. It certainly served its intended purpose and it still gives the graphic image of the devil that we so frequently see in our own minds.

In truth, however, the devil is more like the false prophets who go about like a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”, -going about almost unseen. [**Matthew 7:15**]

This ‘Dantelian vision’ of Satan has fostered off a very cartoonish vision of the devil, reducing his evilness, when it was original in written to instil just how evil he is, was, and ever will be. He justly deserves to be locked away for an eternity, with no hope of a parole, ever. This is no less true of serial killers and serial paedophiles in our world: they just do not believe the rules of society and decency apply to them. How awful is the devil and his servants: -- God’s righteous anger boils at such insults!

Proverbs 3:11-13

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,

12

because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.^[a]

13

Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,

Hebrews 12:6-7

For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is because of discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE

This is one of the hardest of these articles to write. It is hard, because the church takes on a very demanding role in this case, and taxes it very hard. But, like any good and loving parent, that which is hard is built on that which is the most filled with love. Love is then what gives discipline its base from which to work, just as it gives a base for everything we do in the Lord's Way.

This works in both of the two larger areas called discipline: in the very fact of living our lives as true disciples', and in the 'protection of the boundaries in which we are to live. In a very real way, these two come together each time we talk with each other and every time we even hear a sermon, or **perform a duty in the daily life of either the family or the church. Discipline and discipleship are thus twins of one another, always.**

Let us first turn to discipleship, briefly. Discipleship means that we take on the role of a 'follower', -never that of the 'master'. This is very, very important! We must have developed a very clear sense of our position as a follower-learner, as early as possible in our career to ever understand the singleness of mind that the true follower must learn, under the loving guidance and direction of the master who is leading us towards the more involved elements of our position, just like an earthly master craftsman does with an apprentice craftsman. For a great example of how this should work itself out we only need to turn to the very start of Jesus ministry. There, in the earliest days of His teachings, Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to become his disciples in the real profession of 'fishing for men'. He was the 'Master' and they were the ones under his discipline as disciples. He is still calling us, today, to become "real fishermen". **[Matthew 4:18-22]**

What Jesus taught these men would control them for the rest of their lives! They became the great "slaves-Servants" of the church. It is a mighty work, filled with mighty headaches, but it is essential to the on-going life of the church in every place where it currently exists. Are you willing to become a 'disciple of the master teacher'? If so, the next side of discipline will be much easier.

In **Matthew 18: 12-20**, we have the first great teaching on corrective discipline. It too is an act of love, done in defence of the knowable and repeatable boundaries of the Lord's people, in all times. It is based on fellowship.

Fellowship, between brothers, is much more than casual getting together and cups of coffee shared. It is hearts that mesh themselves together and while rejoicing in their common love and faith, encourage each other in their work projects for that 'Master Teacher'. True fellowship is thus an ever growing, every glowing, flame of togetherness, for the Lord. It is watching out for one another, serving one another, and applying all of the "we musts" that have come from the Master, together.

When that goes off the rails, in any way, we are taught that true fellowship will have us go to our wayward brother and speak directly to him about the matter. If that does not work, then we are to take another person with us and go and try talking again. This process is always in support of our fellowship together with the offending brother. This second brother is to assist us and guard us, as we meet the challenge ahead of us. It is not to apply added pressure, although it will do this too. Pressure is not wrong: -ask Paul before Felix, -or Festus, -or especially before king Agrippa. **[Acts 25 through Acts 26:28-29]**

Paul told Euodia and Syntche, from the church in Philippi, to try to get along better. This is a much smaller area of discipline between brothers, but still important and still for the protection of all of the hearts involved and for the sake of 'fellowship'. He even pleads for someone to help these Christians.

[Philippians 4:1-3] This situation between these two ladies, just goes to show that Christians are not automatically great at relationships, or at knowing how to correct things. It just does not necessarily come about with the gifting of the spirit at our spiritual birth. It takes time, effort, and falling down. It also takes the needed, learned, trait of submission. We all are to be in submission to one Jesus, and we all are to be in submission to one another. They work hand and glove together towards one common goal.

What happens if the wayward person does not listen to the words of the more mature apprentices around him or her? This where we may have to withdraw our fellowship from that brother or sister. This when it all gets seriously serious.

God told us, by way of Paul in Romans and in the Thessalonian correspondence, that when we encounter a device person, we are to remove ourselves from him / her. That is hard, if that does not work, then we need to realize that God will turn His back on the one who feels he is so much better than the other members of the Church, allowing that person to on his own way to the halls and fellowship of the unrighteous, for like the rebellion of the angels, that person has no longer been willing to acknowledge the authority of God, as God, and His work through all of the other righteous members of the church. **[Romans 1:28]** **[Jude :11-23]**

Yea, verily..., when the disciplining hand of the Lord falls upon a person, it is very, very, very bad. **[II Thessalonians 3:6]** It is for the salvation of that person's soul, however., and is an act of the toughest kind of love possible, the act of discipline.

There are many other passages on this much larger topic, but this is enough to get us started. This the first real conclusion to **Proverbs 1:7** [which says that the "beginning of wisdom, is the fear of the Lord." Will God actually allow a person to slip away and go to hell? Yes, He will. The divisive person, for an example, is one that will not allow the way of the Lord's church, in peace. "aaah, Yes He will." (Remember that no interpretation of scripture is ever right, if only one person sees it, or more significantly, proclaims it. **[II Peter 1:20]** **[II Peter 2:1-22]**

The only thing left say in this brief essay is that if you are the offending brother, it is wise to go, fix things up quickly, and restore the fellowship, even if it all has not gone so far as to reach the point of withdrawal of fellowship. Saying 'sorry', from the heart, takes a big, big man. It is hard, but for the sake of my own soul and for the sake of the other souls in the church, 'I' must grow up enough, practice submission enough, to go and to do the proper apologies.

"I". "me", "myself", "-I" have to start first with myself and 'repent of my own sins and rebellion before God. The Lord. Then, and only then, can I even consider offering suggestions or placing demands on the church and the church family. This too is discipline. It is found in **Matthew 7:1ff.** It will apply to all levels of relationship and all levels of concern: we just have to clean up our own door step, first. That is a good disciplined discipline to follow. It is really too bad that we expect all others to be perfect, when we, ourselves, are not perfect and in need of the Lord's grace and mercy.

SERMON : THE LORD'S WAY

IN OUR FAMILY LIVES

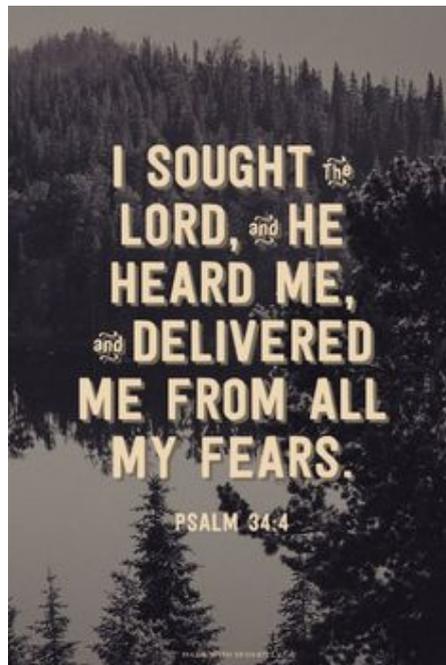
PROVERBS 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go, -even when he is old he will not depart there from."

1. This is one of the most significant, and well-remembered of all the Proverbs for the modern Christian family.
2. However, this is a proverb that is very much misunderstood. We expect something here that it is just not saying, at all. We repeatedly see the kids of this current world forsaking the Lord, and going off into all sorts of perversions. The parents then lose heart, asking "What went wrong?"
3. First: -we know that the real beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 1:7. -----That one basic fact is a given, from the very beginning of this most wisdom filled of all biblical books. It applies to all people, but it applies, most assuredly, to the parents of that particular child.
4. The problem is, is that we often confuse the idea of "**exposure**" with that of "**training**". This problem is something that we, as parents, are not prepared to deal with, or accept the blame when it does not go right.
5. "**Exposure**" can often be the act of a parents sending their children to bible school, to be instructed in the finer points of Godliness, comportment, and of proper thought. "**Training**", however, puts the whole responsibility of that child's future squarely on the parent's shoulders.
6. The parents are to be the principle training factor in every child's life.
7. Thus, it is the responsibility of the parent that is sitting on top of the list and not that of the bible school teacher. This is true, unless, of course, the child's parents are not Christian, themselves. Then it falls to the bible class teacher's responsibility.
8. In this modern world, parents are all only too ready to pass the burden of spiritual training to another person, rather than doing it as God requested in **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**.
9. The parent is the most significant teacher in any child's life. This is where the whole program gets turned around. Both parents are commissioned to be the 'board of education' for the child. They are to teach the fear of the Lord, and the love of the Lord, as a daily event in life. This is much, much, more than just saying it.
10. This is showing it, discussing it, giving illustrations of it, and then saying it, repeatedly. What are your plans in this regard, for tomorrow ?
11. Grandparents, friends, and neighbours are also part of the whole education process. No one is immune from being involved in this teaching process. No one is a solitary and non-participating member of the 'teaching community' to which this passage refers.
12. 4 Step Plan:
 - a. Begin with a family bible study / reading everyday. Those that stop reading will loose their way.
 - b. Include in your discussions and readings things that are on the level of the child, and which are of a concern to him / her.

- c. Have the family memorize scriptures that support the truth, every week. Ask the kids about these passages in current settings, seeking to see how they understand it. [if you struggle with this, ask the teacher at church, or the preacher, or the pastor to help you become the parent you should be.
- d. Live a life yourself that reflects the way of the godly, God-fearing servant, yourself.
- e. Pray together. Let your family prayer time fill a major part of each evening, before bed time.

NEVER LEAVE THE FULL SPIRITUAL TRAINING OF YOUR CHILD TO JUST THE BIBLE CLASS TEACHER. LET HER, OR HIM, HELP YOU, BUT YOU BE THE ONE IN CHARGE SO THAT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IS ACHIEVED BY ALL.



Colossians 3:17

*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

THE LORD'S MAINTAINING **OF ORDER:**

THE ELDERS, DEACONS, **EVANGELISTS, PREACHERS,** **AND TEACHERS**

Where ever there are people, leaders will arise. Some are good, some are very good, but some are not so good. Unless there are some very clear guidelines, the strongest 'leader' will step up and assume the reins of power. This person may, or may not be the one the group really needs. The Lord understands this dynamic of all social structure and has given mankind a set of guidelines by which to help. It is a great moment when the church sees, in one particular person, the qualities that are required to keep the church pure, active and functioning. These people are treasures to be honoured. The work of all of these roles is very different, one from the others, and very necessary to the needs of the whole family.

We will first consider the role and work of the **elders**. So, the elders primary job is to watch after the soul-health of the congregation. They are to know each family, even each person within those family units on a very close level. They are not the chief 'decision makers', although this is often thrust upon them, but rather they are the 'shepherds', the 'pastor' of the flock. They look after the sheep's spiritual health, primarily, thus they need to be the most mature thinking men in the church. (This is a role that is reserved for the males, according to the Lord.)

Second is the **deacons**. Their job is to look, first, at the physical needs of the church. Thus, they too, need to be very aware of the different life struggles that are going on in the church. This means that they are to be out visiting, talking with the members frequently, getting informed as to what is happening on the physical side of life. Thus they need to be aware of such concerns as budgets within which to work, and special services that can be organized to help individual members, as well as many other things. It requires very diligent servant types to fulfil this role. The very term 'deacon' comes from the Koine Greek term for just that, "servant".

The next group, the third group, is that of the **evangelists**. This is usually a much smaller group of people in the congregation who devote their full time to telling the outside world

about Jesus. They are the heralds that announce the coming of the King / Master. It is a very responsible role that will require them to be true 'people, people', outgoing and rather knowledgeable about the bible and the way of the Lord's will. They need to know the plan of salvation intimately, finding ways to speak some good words to those who are outside of the church, currently. They do face lots of time where they feel alone and isolated, but that is something that just goes with this job.

Fourth on our lists are the preachers, the men who stand before the congregation every Sunday and deliver a lesson, or a bit of encouragement, or even a testifying sermon that inspires the Family of believers who sit and listen to them. Some congregation have just one man do this every Sunday, and others pass the challenge around in rotation. *{Both seem to be following the New Testament order of things.}*

The last role on the list is that of **teacher**. This is a person who helps a smaller group within the congregation towards an ever-deepening understanding of the ways that The Lord-God wants us all to follow. Most often, this is done in small classes, with one main teacher and possible some aides who assist this teacher. These people, servants, are to be focused on the fundamentals, normally. However, there is also room for more advanced studies in the word as the student progresses. This requires a watchful to be able to determine those that might need to be challenged a shade, or two more, than the rest. To keep people growing, we must insure their excitement and exuberance in the learning process. This the greatest test of a teacher, by far, yet it is crucial!!! It is best done in close association with the parents, siblings, friends, and colleagues of the student. This too makes for an even greater need for a full fellowship understanding and energy in the people who are called on to do this role. It is never a 'Sunday-only' job.

Now, this is the list of people who help hold the church together. It is short, but complete. These are the major roles. It maybe, that someone is more reticent about being in such a public position and there are places for them to serve as well. The idea is basically, find a need and fill it, for all of us.

Now which one is the actual 'head' of the local church? None are!!!! Each one of these roles can only work if we all work together, doing our own job while supporting the works of the others roles. Many times, we see the elders as the head of the church, traditionally, because of their maturity. These men have been left to handle more of the work of the other roles simply because it is much easier to sit in the audience and 'sort of listen'. That is unfair on the men who are the elders. [There must be more than one elder in a congregation that has men who have grown to a point of being qualified: aka **I Timothy 3:1-13** and **Titus 1: 5-16.**]

For all of us, members and leaders alike, the guiding principle must be to glorify The Lord-God, in the Lord-God's way, in all things that we do. We must accept anything less!

I Timothy 6:12-13

12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who [a]gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ...”

THE LORD'S HALL OF FAME

--HEBREWS 11--

One of the best ways to understand 'faith' as the Lord wants it is to study the lives of those who have received His divine approval. There is no better way to do this than to just quote the whole text of Hebrew 11. If God inspired these words, and we most certainly believe He inspired these words, along with all of the other words of the bible. These are His 'champions' and our 'teachers'.

Hebrews11:1ff

1 Now **faith** is the [a]assurance of *things* [b]hoped for, the [c]conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the men of old [d]gained approval.

3 By **faith** we understand that the [worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. **4** By **faith** **Abel** offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying [about his gifts, and through [g]faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. **5** By **faith** **Enoch** was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. **6** And *without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.* **7** By **faith** **Noah**, being warned by God about things not yet seen,]in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8 By **faith** **Abraham**, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By **faith** he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with **Isaac** and **Jacob**, fellow heirs of the same promise; **10** for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **11** By **faith** even **Sarah** herself received [j]ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, *since she considered Him faithful who had promised.* **12** Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead [k]at that, *as many descendants* as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13 *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* **14** For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. **15** And indeed if they had been [l]thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But as it is, *they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one*. Therefore, God is not [ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith **Abraham**, when he was tested, offered up **Isaac**, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; **18** *it was he* to whom it was said, "In Isaac your [n]descendants shall be called." **19** He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. **20** By faith **Isaac** blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. **21** By faith **Jacob**, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of **Joseph**, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. **22** By faith **Joseph**, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

23 By faith **Moses**, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. **24** By faith **Moses**, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25** choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, **26** considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. **27** By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. **28** By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. **29** By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31 By faith **Rahab the harlot** did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies [t]in peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of **Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets**, **33** who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; **36** and others experienced mocking's and scourging's, yes, also chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated **38** (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

These people, and their fuller stories, mostly found in the Old Testament, are role models for all of us. They encourage us to continue fighting the good fight of faith, day in and day out. We do not follow their Law code for we now have the more perfect way, and that has been given to us all, directly from The Lord-God.

THE LORD'S WAY:

The Conclusion

We have reached a good point to stop and reflect a bit. We have tried to be brief, and simple in these small pictures of what we believe. If you have questions, please feel free to let us know what those questions are.

Obviously, we are not Catholics. We are not Protestant either, nor are we Jewish, nor are we Pentecostals. We are just a common, everyday group of people who are deeply interested in the word of the Lord, and the way of the Lord. This forms the principle boundaries for the things we practice, doing only these things.

Thus, we do not have any one particular site that is the central command point for what we believe, say, or do. We are free from the control of others, who live in far-away places, that do not really understand the situation where we are at. We are just 'simple Christians'. Does this mean that the situation dictates what we believe and do, then? No, we are just free from outside control, but we are under God's guiding hand in regard to the 'Way', most assuredly.

We do not believe in legalism and the worshipping of rules, for rules sake, for instance. Neither do we believe in being so literal that we miss out on the real Christian experiences of life, so no literalism for us, either. We do not cater to the whims of the more currently popular desires in regard to worship, like the rejection of the gender ordinances of the Lord, but we practice keeping within our own core beliefs which focus on "Jesus, and Him crucified. We, also want to do the things like He would have done, and which He would approve. We do hold to the traditions of very long standing, at least the one that the first century church practiced, if they are in agreement with the teachings of the New Testament. The word is very important to us, just as relationship are important, with the given of these boundaries.

We believe in absolutes that you can count on being there continually, so we reject a purely relative, or post-modern, perspective on life. No relativism, no self-rule, no modern Nihilism, nor any New age based thinking, is going to be found in our group. If any of these are found, we will try to seek the Lord's way and correct our thinking.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and He spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

ADDENDUMS TO COME:

- 1. THE WAY'S WISDOM: PROVERBS 1:7**
- 2. THE LORD'S NAMES: KNOWING GOD BETTER**
- 3. THE LORD'S DEMONSTRATIONS OF POWER:
MIRACLES THEN AND MIRACLES TODAY**
- 4. THE LORD'S FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES:
PROVERBS 22:6**
- 5. SPECIAL: CHILD CARE IN THE CURRENT
CLIMATE OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF PAEDOPHILIA**

