

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

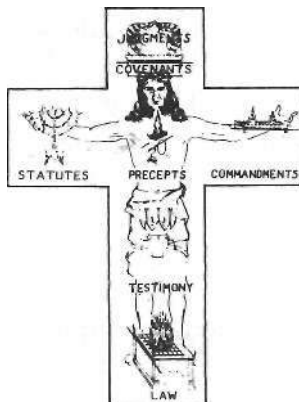
Why Say the Crucified Way?.....	9
No Reason to Fear.....	43
The Inescapable Question.....	65

## INTRODUCTION

The stature of truth, portrayed by the four points of the cross, is frequently used because it pictures the full stature of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Mosaic Tabernacle. The stature (four points of the cross) depicts the spiritual experiences that we will know as we grow up into spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ. God is the Master Teacher. He uses figures, types, shadows, parables, metaphors and allegories throughout His Word in order to illustrate Divine Truth.

When the children of Israel in the wilderness, for example, needed a way of approach to and communion with a Holy God, He provided the Mosaic Tabernacle which was a picture, a shadow, a type of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (Hebrews 9:9).



The first tabernacle known as the Mosaic Tabernacle was only a shadow for that time of the stature and ministry of the second greater and more perfect Tabernacle, Jesus Christ, who with brightness and glory caused the shadows to flee and the truth to stand revealed as the illuminating splendor of the noon day sun. The Mosaic Tabernacle was a figure, that is an outlined shape of the stature of Jesus Christ. Thus, God instructed Moses four times to build the tabernacle after the pattern which was shown to him in the mount. The seven pieces of furniture in Moses' tabernacle were laid out in the form of a cross; each piece representing a portion of the stature of Jesus Christ. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;" (Hebrews 9:11).

The body or tabernacle, which the Holy Ghost conceived as it overshadowed the blessed Virgin, was a new fabric, a new order of building infinitely superior to the earthly structure. However, since the Mosaic Tabernacle was a divine blueprint or outline of the stature of the Son of God, it becomes a guiding light to reveal to our hearts how to grow up unto the measure of the fulness of Christ. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Ephesians 4:13).

Because the Tabernacle is a picture of the Son of God in whom is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, we may expect the wisdom and knowledge of all other Scripture to fit together with it. The whole Bible is a beautiful revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this truth, God is able to say that ALL Scripture is profitable. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-

struction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16,17).

This book has been written in obedience to His command that we should share a few of the quickened truths He has so graciously placed in our hearts. He has promised that it will bless the hearts of those who are looking for His soon return from glory and who have a desire to be ready and to have on their wedding garments. The prayerful desire and motive of our hearts is that each reader will receive a new vision and greater love for the blessed LORD JESUS CHRIST.

-The Author

## WHY SAY THE CRUCIFIED WAY?

Man has advanced more in this century than in any other age. Perhaps the word change is most descriptive of our time. Without doubt, some changes such as the discovery of electricity, have improved the living standards of the average family. Furthermore, the list of household conveniences continues to grow with each passing year. The airplane and the automobile have also expanded our horizon by enabling people to visit cities and countries about which their grandparents only dreamed. Faster transportation changed our whole way of life. Already man is working toward his next goal which is space travel. With such growth of natural knowledge one expects a similar increase in spiritual understanding, Christianity has suffered, however, in the hands of change. Instead of experiencing spiritual awakening, the modern church seeks to nullify or destroy all the old land marks of faith. No longer do they want to hear songs about the blood. Using the excuse that the Blood of Jesus was much too unpleasant to mention to children, man ripped the old-time favorites out of his song books. Strange is it not, that these same fearful fathers allow their children to watch unmentionable atrocities on television. By the hour children see the blood of men

spilled in every possible way, yet only the Blood of Jesus Christ strikes fear in the hearts of their elders.

Moreover, one may sit in some modern churches for weeks without hearing the Name of Jesus mentioned. It is no longer considered polite to speak of Jesus; one must refer, instead, to Christ. The social gospel directs its latest attack against the Cross, saying, "The Cross might offend someone, so let's stop calling it the way of the Cross, the Crucified Way." Seeking to disguise and hide the Cross, man suggests, "Let's call it the Abundant Life; call it the Waters of Life, call it anything but the Cross, the Crucified Way." Beloved, only gross ignorance prompts such remarks. Apart from the Cross of Jesus Christ, apart from the Crucified Way, man has no abundant life.

When we speak of THE CROSS, we refer not to the literal physical cross upon which Jesus Christ suffered and died. Surely the same carpenter who made the crosses for the two thieves also made the cross for Jesus. Neither the shame nor the power of the Cross lies in the two sticks of wood erected on Calvary's hill. Upon that literal cross hung a man called Jesus Christ, who walked all the days of His life with His human will nailed in subjection to the divine will of God. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the living Cross. Apart from him we have no life, for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). To despise the Cross is to despise life itself. Yet, this is exactly what man does when he wants to stop calling it the way of the Cross, the Crucified Way. Did Jesus not say, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

God's Word differentiates between the Cross of Jesus Christ and our personal cross. Before hanging on Calvary's

Cross, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall come after me, let him deny himself, and take up *his cross*, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). *His cross* in this case, refers to each man's personal cross. For some, the personal cross may take the shape of an unsaved husband or wife. It may be a retarded child or some personal affliction. For others, it may be financial reverses. The Cross speaks of the humiliation, suffering, surrender, obedience, and crucifixion that each man must bear. Suffering comes to saint and sinner alike; none escape pain in this life. We must, therefore, pick up our personal cross daily and bear it as we walk the way of THE CROSS, the Crucified Way.

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to grow up into the fulness of the stature of Christ.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Since the Living Word of God was laid out in the form of a cross, it is no surprise to see God's Word following the same pattern. The most classic example, of course, is the Old Testament Tabernacle. Nowhere in all the Word of God do we find a more minute detail of the full stature of Christ than in the tabernacle in the wilderness. God arranged seven pieces of furniture in Moses' tabernacle in the form of a cross to portray the body, the stature of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who lived with his human will nailed to His Father's will. Man may despise the Cross and want to

call it by another name; he may refuse to walk in the way of the Cross, the Crucified Way, choosing instead to go in the way of pride and self-will. However, when we realize that the CROSS speaks of the stature of Christ Himself, we love the Cross and everything it represents. Because we love Jesus Christ, the Living Cross, and desire to know Him, we gladly walk the Crucified Way, for it is the way He walked.

Carnal eyes look at the Cross and see only suffering. The Devil takes advantage of people who know little about their Bibles by saying, "You don't want to go that way; you'll never have anything except misery. It is all suffering and death." Deceived, many turn back and walk no more in the way of the Cross, the way of crucifixion and death to the carnal will. They miss **all** the glory and beauty of the Cross because they fail to realize that suffering represents only a small part of the stature of the Cross. Many Christians never really see the beauty of the Cross. None should decide to forsake the way of THE CROSS, however, until he first considers the full stature of the Cross. If we want our decision to be based upon truth, we must understand that suffering is only one fourth of the Cross. The other three fourths is reward, power, and glory. Surely the suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

#### IV. THE GLORY

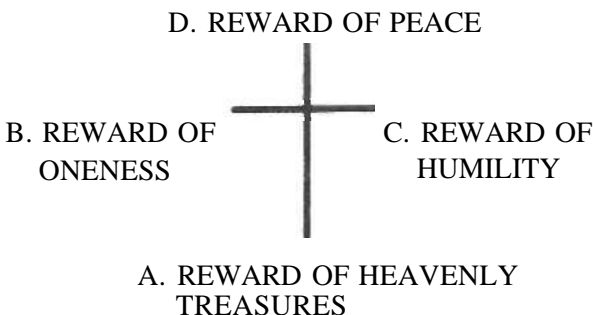


## I. THE REWARDER

The Cross is a way of life; it is the way Jesus walked all the days of His earthly journey. If we would follow Christ, we too must walk the way of the Cross, the way of humility, surrender, and obedience to the divine will of God.

God knows how the human heart shrinks in fear when faced with pain and suffering. He, therefore, never asks us to fellowship the suffering of the Cross until He first unveils the Cross as a Rewarder. In other words, He lifts us up in the Spirit and gives us a vision of what it is like going all the way with the Cross. After giving us a foretaste of the glory and beauty of the Cross, God brings us down out of the heavenlies and introduces us to the suffering. Everyone wants the rewards of the Cross; they all want the power and the glory, but comparatively few want all of the Cross. God uses suffering to rule out the insincere, the proud, and the haughty.

Let us view a stature of the rewards of the Cross.



## A. REWARD OF HEAVENLY TREASURES

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions (Mark 10:17-22).

From all appearances, the young man made a good candidate for the Crucified Way. Boldly, he ran to kneel at the feet of the Living Cross, Jesus Christ. Unlike Nicodemus who came at night, this young man humbled himself before everyone. To the natural eye he appeared to be sincere in his desire for truth. Furthermore, he sounded as though great hunger for knowledge prompted his inquiry, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Astonishment and anger filled the young man's heart when Jesus told him, in so many words, that the life he requested comes through the Cross. "...One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and *thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come,*

*take up the cross, and follow me."*

According to God's Word, Jesus loved the young man before He ever revealed the Cross to him. Thus, love, rather than hate or a sadistic desire to see another suffer, moved Jesus to show the young ruler the way to possess God's heavenly treasure. From the very beginning it has always been God's love that unveiled the Cross.

The Cross speaks of humility; it speaks of surrender and obedience; it speaks of love. In order to walk the Crucified Way, the Living Cross surrendered to be separated from all that He held dear. He nailed all His loves, all His desires, to the Cross so that He might do His Father's will. Jesus told the rich young ruler to rid himself of the carnal things that he loved outside of the Cross. Considering the magnitude of the young man's request, we realize that Jesus asked a small sacrifice. He asked that the young man surrender only a few natural coins in exchange for eternal life, heavenly treasures. Although he possessed much in worldly goods, the young man lacked enough love for God to pay the price to obtain heavenly treasures. The Bible says he went away grieved. The word *grieved* traces back to a Greek word which means to carry a grudge. In other words, he went away with an ill feeling, a grudge, against the Word that he heard. The heavenly treasure did not provoke bitterness; only his lack of love caused him to walk away from the Cross.

This same spirit still lives today. When people first hear the message of growing up in the stature of the Lord Jesus Christ and being in the New City, great enthusiasm fills their hearts. They want nothing more, it seems, than to be in the Bride. It is another matter, however, when Jesus starts asking for separation from their other loves. All too frequently they turn away grieved, clutching a handful of rusty coins, as it were. God, grant us spiritual eyes to see

all natural riches and natural loves in the light of eternity. Fill our souls with such a consuming love for Jesus that our hearts long for nothing more than Him and our hands cling to nothing except the Cross.

Jesus promised the rich young ruler that he would have reward in the heavenlies if he would take up the Cross and follow Him. We need not wait, however, until we get to glory before tasting of the heavenly treasure. The Cross starts rewarding us in this life with spiritual wealth, spiritual treasures.

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Take up the Cross"? When we take up the Cross, we take up His humility, His surrender, His love and His forgiveness. We must take up everything that He demonstrated by His own life and make it our own. Beloved, we cannot take up His life without leaving a part of ourself behind. We must leave our pride if we would bear His humility. We must exchange our self-will for His surrender, our hatred and bitterness for His love and mercy.

In the natural, if a pan is scorched by the fire, it is useless until the scorch is scrubbed away because no one enjoys eating food which was cooked in a scorched pot. The pot imparts the scorched smell and taste to all food that is cooked in it. Only after the owner of the scorched pot takes out the scouring pads and works diligently, is the pot restored to its former usefulness and beauty. The same principle works in the spiritual realm, God has vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. If we want to be an honorable vessel, we must let God clean out our vessel. Sometimes, as we pass through this life, our vessel gets scorched like the pot. People burn us with their fiery tongues; they fill our hands with burning coals. Just as a natural pot cannot be cleaned by simply pouring water over it, neither can a scorched heart be made clean by only

mentally pleading the Blood, Fire, and Water over our hurt, resentful feelings. So often we glibly say, "Oh, I forgive you, Brother. Sure, everything is all right. Bless your heart, I forgive you." In spite of our words, we are conscious of a subtle sticky feeling down inside. What is wrong? Our vessel, our heart, is still scorched. If we want to be an honorable vessel we must allow God to clean our heart out by nailing our hurt feelings to the Cross. Great is our reward in heaven if we take up the Cross, but this we cannot do without nailing our flesh to it. Before Jesus commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He forgave the men who crucified Him and cast lots for His garments.

The rich young ruler went away grieved and angry after Jesus told him that the way to obtain eternal life was through the Cross. Thinking he had done some great thing by keeping the commandments, the young ruler expected praise for doing something that was no more than his duty to God. He preferred to cling to his exalted opinion of himself and his grudging bitter attitude, rather than take up the Cross and be seated in the heavenlies. How often do we, too, feel grieved when we hear that we must pick up the Cross and die on it in order to receive the heavenly treasures that our hearts long for. Beloved, the Crucified Way is real, and it has power to make us real, if we let it. We have no power to keep others from hurting us. We can, however, begin carrying the humility, the surrender, and obedience, and the love of the Cross. When we go to our prayer closet and to the Word of God carrying this Cross, He starts rewarding us with the treasure of life which strengthens us to carry our personal cross. Beloved, how can we ever compare our little cross to the one that Jesus carried for us. Love for His humility, surrender, and obedience will provoke such gratitude that our hearts will cry, "Jesus, I'm unworthy to fellowship your surrender and

obedience. My cross is nothing." Gladly do we bear the Cross knowing heavenly treasures await us when we return to our prayer closet. Let us consider some other heavenly treasures we can expect to receive as God lifts us up into the heavenlies with Him.

## 1. Blessing

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

The word *blessing* means to kneel in praise and adoration. Occasionally, we enter into God's house feeling so dead that God seems a million miles away. At times like these we have little praise or worship to offer to the Lord. It is unnecessary, however, to go through a service with the same dead feeling. If we let the Holy Ghost check our lives, He will show us new ways to bear the Cross of humility and surrender. He will show us attitudes and dispositions we have that are not like Jesus. Not long after we start clinging to the Cross, He lifts us up into the heavenlies and blesses us with a spirit of worship. The waters of praise and adoration flood our souls; tears of worship stream down as He immediately rewards us for taking up the Cross. We find the treasure, the blessing of kneeling at the feet of the Living Cross and pouring out our souls in praise, adoration, and worship.

## 2. Union

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

The word *sit* traces back to a Greek word which means to brood, to hover over. The thought is similar to that of a mother hen hovering over her nest of eggs. While she sits on the eggs, she clucks and broods over them until they come to birth. Beloved, the Lord lifts us up into heavenly places so we can brood together with Him over the precious eggs, as it were, of the Word of God which must be brought to birth in our hearts. God quickens His Word and makes it alive to us as we sit in the heavenlies with Him. New life comes, however, only after we have let Jesus nail our old life, our old carnal will, to His Cross. We leave our pride and stubbornness on the Cross to walk in His humility and surrender. The Cross is the ticket, as it were, to a jet ride into the heavenlies where we brood over God's Word until our souls get joined to it. How sad that the rich young ruler missed the heavenly treasures in God's Word because he refused to carry the cross.

### **3. Victory**

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:8-10).

The Devil continually seeks to separate us from the Lord Jesus and from the Cross. At times we battle such tremendous forces of the enemy that it seems all hell has

been unleashed against us. Over and over the enemy says, "You might as well give up. You are no match for the powers that are coming against you. You'll never be in the Bride. Go on, give up!" God permits the Devil to attack in this manner because He loves to prove the overcoming power of the Cross. At the same time that Roman soldiers nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross, He spoiled principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:15). Furthermore, He does the same for us every time we sell out afresh and anew to take up the Cross. The Cross that overcame principalities and powers in Jesus' life will overcome them in our lives if we get joined to it. God seeks to display the Cross in our lives just as He did on Golgotha's hill. The way of the Cross leads into the heavenlies, and it leads to victory over principalities and powers of the enemy. Victory is part of the heavenly treasure.

#### **4. The New City**

But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Hebrews 12:22).

The New City, God's heavenly Jerusalem, is part of the treasure in heaven now. If we join ourselves to the Cross for new crucifixion to our will, He will lift us up into the heavenlies by His Spirit and let us walk, as it were, in the New City so that we can know the joys awaiting those who carry the Cross all the way. The Cross is not all crucifixion and suffering; the rewards of the New City bring such ecstasy and delight that the soul almost disintegrates with love for the Bridegroom. Beloved, we cannot abide con-

stantly in the New City yet, but He faithfully lets us taste the love and pleasure of this heavenly treasure as we join ourselves to the Cross.

## **B. THE REWARD OF ONENESS**

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Ephesians 2:16).

Great is the reward of the Cross because it reconciles unto God. During the Old Testament dispensation, the animal blood which they offered only covered sin; it possessed no power to restore man to his original relationship of oneness with God. The saints of the Old Testament, therefore, died in faith looking forward to the Cross of Jesus Christ which would make it possible for them to enter once more into the presence of the Lord.

If the Cross rewarded with nothing more than oneness with God, our hearts should sing through the endless ages of eternity, but the Cross also brings oneness with all others who carry it. Just as sin stood as a giant wall separating man from God, so does it divide man from his fellows. Apart from the Cross of Christ, the Jew hates the Gentile, and the Gentile despises the Jew. When, however, the Gentile comes to the Cross of Christ, He begins to feel the love that Jesus has for the Jew. Similarly, as the Jew embraces the Cross, he feels the Lord's mercy and compassion for the Gentile. The enmity, the animosity, that each felt for the other is nailed to the Cross making it possible for them to dwell together in oneness and love. Beloved, if the Cross can break down the wall of sin separating God and man, then the ancestral enmity between the Jew and the Gentile is a small thing. The Cross brings oneness between

all races, as well as individuals, who cling to it. We cannot carry the Cross of humility and surrender and still hold on to our bitterness and strife.

Consider, for example, two Christian brothers who allow sin to create a rift, a separation, in their friendship. Both feel resentment toward the other, but how beautiful is the reward of oneness when each comes to the Cross. One approaches the Cross crying, "Lord, I don't have the right attitude in this situation. I'm not acting the way You would act. Jesus, when You hung on Calvary's Cross You prayed, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' Lord, I want that same surrender, that same humility, Jesus, I want that same love." On the other side of the Cross, his brother begins to cry, "Oh Jesus, forgive me. I want to be like you. Give me the right attitude; give me the same spirit of surrender and humility that You had." As each Christian comes to the Cross, he sees his brother praying over on the other side, and the Cross yokes them together. By slaying the enmity the Cross takes away the bitterness from each heart and rewards with oneness. In addition to the glorious feeling that unity brings to the individuals, it creates a wall of love that presents a tremendous bulwark of strength against the forces of the Devil seeking to bring division to the body of Christ.

How can we deny the Cross, the Crucified Way? Outside of the Cross of humility we have no unity and no abundant life. When we truly embrace the Cross of Christ it brings oneness and harmony.

### **C. THE REWARD OF HUMILITY**

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form

of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:  
And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled  
himself, and became obedient unto death, even the  
death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

The third reward of the Cross is humility. How often does the flesh say, "I've had all I'm going to take; I'm just not going to take it anymore." Although these words may have never escaped our lips, we have all had the thoughts come up in our minds. Until we remember that the Cross is a rewarder, we think, "God, I can't take another step. I've just gone as far as I can go. My cross is too heavy." On the other hand, if we start praying, "Jesus, I want to be like You. I want to please You. Don't let my flesh keep me from obeying You," Jesus soon gives us a vision of His Cross, and all His suffering and humility pervades our heart. Very quickly we repent for ever thinking our personal cross was too heavy to bear.

We all pass through hurtful, humiliating experiences in this life which we must either deal with at the Cross, allowing Him to reward us with His humility, or else watch bitterness fill our hearts. The humble mind of Christ never fears the low place. It willingly crawls like a worm, if necessary, to do the will of God or to see somebody else go on for God.

All too frequently our attitudes reflect absolutely none of the humility of Christ. Often we would rather hate than forgive. We prefer pride until Jesus shows us His mercy toward His enemies, then we fall at the feet of the Cross, crying to know His humility. After He rewards with His humility, we can actually rejoice as we accept the headship of the Lord. We forgive and feel only love toward those we once hated. It is just as though they never hurt us. The Crucified Way rewards with humility.

## D. THE REWARD OF PEACE

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Colossians 1:20).

Before God introduces us to the suffering of the Cross, the Cross rewards with peace. All the rewards of the Cross enable us to bear the suffering.

The word *reconcile* means to change thoroughly. It is possible to humble oneself in a situation without feeling the reward of peace. Peace means an absence of disturbance, an absence of agitation, an absence of warfare, an absence of nervousness. Frequently what Christians call nervousness is nothing less than the lack of inward peace. They look for peace of heart and mind apart from the Cross of humility, but find only turmoil and unrest. The eyes of unrest distort the shape of all they look upon. This slanted twisted vision causes one to dread or even hate what he sees. Let us use, for example, a husband and wife who are fighting between themselves. The husband sees no good in his wife; to him she looks like a nagging ungrateful wretch who accepts the shelter of his home and heart, giving nothing in return. The wife, on the other hand, sees only this thoughtlessness, his weaknesses, and lack of ambition. Soon the husband dreads to go home as much as the wife resents his arrival. What is wrong? Both need to take their eyes off the **THING** and put them upon the Cross. The Blood of the Cross is able to reconcile all things, to change all things, even our wicked alienated minds. All outward circumstances may remain the same, but when the Cross brings peace to our hearts, He changes our feelings toward the **THING** that we formerly dreaded; it no longer seems re-

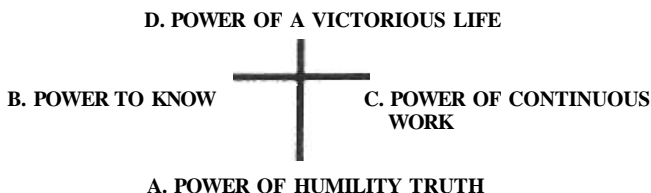
pulsive, hateful, or bitter. The Blood of peace makes the difference.

The Cross of Christ brings oneness with God and breaks down the walls of enmity which separates us from others who also carry His Cross. Moreover, the Cross imparts the humility of Christ which enables us to humble our minds in every circumstance of life. His humility allows us to walk peacefully down the same stairway of humiliation that Jesus walked. The storms of life may continue to rage, but the inward agitation and strife of our soul ceases when the reward of peace comes.

After God opens our spiritual eyes to see the Cross and its rewards, we feel only pity for those who walk away with a grudge. By refusing to carry the Cross, these people limit themselves to a few natural possessions. The heavenly treasures go only to those who fervently love the Cross. After recognizing the eternal value of the heavenly rewards, we expect to be brought immediately to the suffering. Instead, God mercifully reveals the power of the Cross.

## **II. THE POWER OF THE CROSS**

We live in a power-mad world. Men strive and even kill to gain just a little more of the thing called power. Yet, few people know what true power is or how to go about making it their own. All real and lasting power is hid in the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Way of the Cross is the way of the power of God. Let us study the stature of the power that God has invested in the living Cross.



## A. POWER OF HUMILITY TRUTH

The desire to *dress up* the gospel dates back to the days of the early church. The Apostle Paul dealt with this problem by saying, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: *not with the wisdom of words*, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (I Corinthians 1:17).

Paul had greater educational advantages, religious background, training, and position than perhaps any of the other apostles. Yet he never used his extensive vocabulary to hide the power of the Cross. He never used his Jewish heritage or his position in the synagogue to draw people, for he knew that the power of salvation lay in the humility truth that hung on Calvary's Cross.

God's humility staggers the mind. The Living Word humbled Himself to take on flesh in order to redeem fallen man. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14). The Truth suffered supreme humiliation while hanging on the Cross for us. From the chief priest down to the thieves who hung on each side, Jesus heard, "...He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe..." (Mark 15:31,32).

Jesus was not lacking in power to redeem Himself from the suffering and humiliation that came during His trial and crucifixion. While still in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter, "Put up again thine sword into his place: ...Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of

angels?" (Matthew 26:52,53).

Nothing less than the power of divine humility held Jesus to the Cross. If He had succumbed to the ridicule of the crowd, He might have proven His power to a few men standing around the Cross, but by so doing, He would have forfeited forever the power to redeem the souls of all mankind. Foolish men said, "Prove your power NOW." But through humility Jesus gained eternal power of salvation.

The sinner's first experience with salvation comes when he falls at the foot of the Cross and receives redemption from the penalty of sin which is death. The power of the Cross does not stop, however, with the initial experience. Paul told the Corinthian church, "...unto us which ARE saved (Christians) it IS (present tense) the power of God." None of us reach spiritual maturity the moment that we receive Jesus Christ into our lives, for it takes time for the marriage relationship between our will and the will of God to be perfected. Each day gives us new opportunities to let the power of humility save us from the pride of our carnal wills.

Yet, all too frequently God's people sit service after service in lovely auditoriums listening to white robed choirs sing bloodless songs. They hear meticulously dressed ministers speak eloquently about the "Abundant Life" and the "Wells of Living Waters." Everyone is completely oblivious of Golgotha's bloody scene and everyone goes away with his proud heart untouched and unchanged.

Beloved, the power of the Cross is in the humility of Jesus Christ. Once we have personally felt the touch of His humility and seen the change that it has wrought in our lives, we love the Cross and desire to hold it high for all the world to see. Only humility truth has power to save from pride. We cannot cover up His humility and still expect it to turn people from their proud ways.

Sometimes we feel that our personal cross is just too heavy to bear. We may even consider casting it aside in order to prove that we have power to redeem ourselves from an unpleasant situation. This is when we must go out to Calvary's Cross for another look at the power of His humility that held Him to the Cross while His own created beings flung accusations in His face. Such humility has power today to save us from the pride that causes us to think that our cross is too heavy. Each time that we touch the living Cross, we feel a new surge of the love and forgiveness that He demonstrated to those who crucified Him. The Cross will impart new power to surrender our wills to the will of God.

If we choose to exercise the power of our carnal will now, we limit ourselves to temporal power, power which can last no longer than a mortal life span. On the other hand, those who choose the humility of the Cross now will forever know the power of the living Cross. If we expect to love and fellowship the Cross in eternity, we must get acquainted with Him down here.

## **B. POWER TO KNOW**

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (I Corinthians 2:1,2).

Again Paul reminds the Corinthians that he never covered the power of the Cross with the excellent words of wisdom which he acquired at the feet of his Hebrew teacher, Gamaliel. Then he went on to say that he was determined to know nothing in their midst except Jesus Christ, the cru-

cified One,

All through scripture God uses the word *know* to signify the marriage union between a husband and his wife. For example, "And Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain,.. And Adam *knew* his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth..." (Genesis 4:1-25). When the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary that she would bring forth a son, she immediately replied, "...How shall this be, seeing I *know* not a man?" (Luke 1:34).

Doubtless Paul saw many other things to which he might have joined his will, such as their erroneous opinions and ideas, or he might have joined himself to their murmuring, their criticism, or their rebellion. This is the normal pattern for the flesh to follow. The flesh needs only a brief exposure to someone else's bad spirit before it joins itself to that spirit. But Paul purposed in his heart not to be joined to the fleshly attitudes and dispositions of those about him because he already knew about the rewards and the power of being joined to Jesus Christ, the Living Cross.

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of the power that the Cross has to join a human will in marriage relationship with the divine will of God. The prophet Isaiah described Him as a root out of a dry ground (Isaiah 53:2). In the natural a root draws its nourishment from the soil and air about it, but this was not so with Jesus, the root out of a dry ground. Men despised Him, cursed Him, called Him Beelzebub, even crucified Him, yet He never joined Himself to their hatred or blasphemy. Through the power of surrender, Jesus was able to walk all the days of His life with His human will joined to God's will. The divine will of Christ inside of Him nourished and sustained His life.

It is unnecessary, then, for us to take up the rebellious spirits of those around us because the Cross still has power to make us *know* or be joined to the divine will of God.

## C. POWER OF CONTINUOUS WORK

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin (Romans 6:6).

The old man IS (present tense) crucified. It is impossible for our human will to hang on the living Cross without something happening to our wills because the power of crucifixion works continuously. When a part of our fleshly nature comes up, we run immediately to the Cross and feel its power of crucifixion begin to subdue the flesh. Then we continue seeking God in prayer and the Word of God. As time goes by circumstances change, and we feel less conscious of the crucifixion power. Many times months pass before God puts us back into a situation similar to the one that caused our temper, for example, to flare up in the first place. Then we realize how effectively the power of crucifixion has worked. We are able to maintain victory and peace in a situation where we normally would have exploded in a fit of temper.

Crucifixion is a slow and painful death in the natural. History records some who survived for as many as nine days before finally expiring. Neither is spiritual crucifixion an instantaneous death. Until we recognize the Cross' power to work continuously, we feel tempted to turn loose of the Cross. The Devil comes along to say, "Look what a mess you are. You can't even control your temper. You're nothing but a hypocrite. Why don't you forget about the Crucified Way? You'll never be any different than you are today." Beloved, never mind about how big and strong the flesh may be; it cannot compare with the power of the Cross to work continuously. If a natural cross has power to bring death to those who hang upon it, how much greater

is the power of God's living Cross to work death in our flesh. We need not worry about changing ourselves, for the Cross accomplishes the change as we cling to it.

We need not wait until the next church night to experience the continual working of the cross. The Apostle Paul said, "I AM crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:10). Paul experienced the working of the power of crucifixion in his life daily; moment by moment he offered his flesh up for crucifixion. While his fleshly man hung on the cross, Paul also felt the quickening power of the life of Christ working in his being.

The Crucified Way worked for Paul, and it will work for us. As we offer our old carnal wills up for crucifixion, the power of the Cross will begin to work death to our flesh, and Christ will begin to live in a new way in our hearts.

#### **D. POWER OF A VICTORIOUS LIFE**

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that he should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (Galatians 3:1).

Since the man Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem and not in the midst of the Galatians, this scripture must refer to the visible witness of the power of the Cross in Paul's own life. He did more than preach about the power; he let it work humility and crucifixion in his own heart. Paul said in so many words, "I stood before you as a victorious example of one who died daily, as one who let the power of the Cross bring death to my carnal will." Even if the

Galatians had failed to understand the word that Paul preached, they could not miss seeing the reality of that Word working in his life. They had to recognize the humility, surrender, and obedience that they saw exemplified before their eyes.

Spiritual growth is a progressive experience. Each day brings new situations into our lives which reveal deeper depths and higher heights of our carnal wills, thereby giving us new opportunities to offer our flesh up for crucifixion. But beloved, the flesh that we hang on the Cross today is not the same flesh that we offered when we first started clinging to the Cross. The Apostle Paul said, "And they that are Christ's *have crucified* (past tense) the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

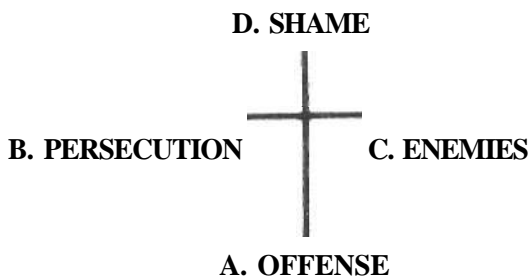
Through the continuously working power of the Cross we reach a place of complete victory over a measure of our flesh. For example, we no longer go to the places which we once frequented because the DESIRE has hung on the Cross until we can actually say, "It is dead; it HAS BEEN crucified." Moreover, we can look back and see the many fleshly attitudes and dispositions that the Cross has completely crucified. This victory gives us no reason to boast in the flesh. The power to crucify the flesh and the power which causes us to walk victoriously in this life belongs to the living Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him belongs all the glory and praise.

Consider the goodness of God. When He unveils the Cross He shows us the rewards of the Cross and then the power of the Cross which includes: the power of humility truth, the power to know union with the will of God, the power of continuous work, and the power of victory. All these God shows before He brings us to the suffering of the Cross.

### III. THE SUFFERING OF THE CROSS

The rewards of the Cross and the power of the Cross draw all kinds of people who say that they want to walk the Crucified Way with Jesus Christ, and as long as the blessings come their way, they walk with the Cross. When suffering comes, however, many turn back. God uses suffering as a sieve to separate the sincere from the insincere. He will not impart the pleasures of His eternal glory to those who reject the pain of the Cross.

Let us consider the suffering that belongs to the living Cross.



#### A. OFFENSE

And I, brethren, if I preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased (Galatians 5:11).

The word *offense* means to strike the foot against something, a thing that offends; it means an occasion to fall, an occasion of unbelief, of doubts, of attacks, assaults, displeasure. Thus, we understand that the offense comes from the Cross Himself. It is He who kicks and offends the flesh.

Among the Jews, circumcision was a well established doctrine which dated back to the days of Abraham. Yet, when the Cross came, He began to kick against their doctrines, not because circumcision was wrong, but because they had allowed it to become an empty form. Real circumcision goes beyond the physical and touches the heart (Romans 2:29). The Jews, as a whole, never let the sharp sword of God's Word cut away the self-righteousness and pride of their hearts. Instead, the Cross became an offense to them.

Jesus offended many when He declared Himself to be Living Bread, greater than the manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness. The Jews were offended to think that they needed spiritual circumcision; they were offended to hear that they did not already possess the Bread which furnished eternal and resurrection life. John tells us, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). When Jesus asked the twelve if they would also go away, Peter replied, "...Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Accepting the kicking and offense, a few clung to the Cross.

The Cross continues to kick against man's erroneous ideas and opinions. God's perfect plan is for us to bring our ideas and doctrines to the foot of the Cross and wait in prayer and in the Word until the truth begins to kick against our false doctrines. If we refuse to accept His personal kicking, He will allow the kicking to come through a loved one, a brother or sister in the Lord, or perhaps through a fellow employee.

The Apostle Peter affords an excellent example of this truth. While in a trance, Peter saw a great sheet con-

taining all manner of unclean animals descend out of heaven. God said, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (Acts 10:13). These words offended Peter's Jewish doctrine. Never had he transgressed the dietary laws given to Moses. But God said, "...What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15).

God's purpose for giving the vision was to show Peter that He was no respecter of persons. Although the Jews considered the Gentiles an unholy and unclean people, Jesus loved them and died to save them. Seemingly, Peter received the kicking from the Cross, for he agreed to preach the gospel to the household of Cornelius, the centurion. Later, however, Paul severely rebuked Peter for separating himself from the Gentile saints at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter received the second kick openly before all men because he failed to really accept the Cross' private personal kick. So it is today. Many times God uses those who are close to us to kick against our proud opinions of ourselves. We weep bitter tears of self-pity when all the time it is the Cross trying to show us a layer of flesh which we have been ignoring.

The message of crucifying the flesh is as much of a stumblingblock today as it was to the Jews. Paul said, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" (I Corinthians 1:23). The Jews stumbled and never acknowledged their need for personal crucifixion, but we need not follow their example. When the Cross kicks against our flesh it is our opportunity to stretch ourselves out on the Cross and say, "Here I am, Lord, crucify my flesh. Make me like you, Jesus." Beloved, it is easier and better to suffer the offense of the Cross than to suffer eternal separation from Him.

## B. PERSECUTION

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:12).

Persecution is the second suffering of the Cross. The word *persecution* means to breathe hard after; it means to pursue, to follow with the motive and intention of slaying and killing. Some persecuted and even desired to kill Paul because he refused to make circumcision a prerequisite for the salvation of the Gentiles. The Gentiles kept the righteousness of the law, but their uncircumcised bodies drew persecution from those who had nothing more than the outward sign of circumcision. By their unChrist-like actions toward the Gentile saints, the persecutors demonstrated clearly that they had never let God circumcise the fleshly attitudes of their hearts. The Cross offended their Jewish doctrine, so they persecuted Paul and the Gentile saints out of hatred for the Cross rather than animosity against an individual.

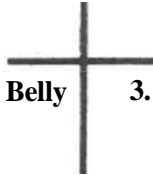
During the days of his flesh, Jesus Christ, the Living Cross, exposed the carnality in the human heart, and for this reason men persecuted and killed Him. Today since the Cross is omnipresent, He can live in the hearts of all those who walk His pathway of surrender and obedience. It is the living Cross that men see in our lives that causes them to persecute us when we have done no wrong. All those who follow the Cross must expect to share His persecution.

## C. ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Philippians 3:17-19).

In these verses Paul lets the Philippian Christians know that they could expect enemies who would seek to distract them from following the Cross and laying hold of the prize. Let us consider a stature of truth concerning the enemies of the Cross.

### 4. Mind Earthly Things



2. Their God is Their Belly

3. Glory in Their Shame

1. End is Destruction

### 1. End is Destruction

We may avoid incurring the wrath of these enemies by forsaking the way of crucifixion, the way of surrender and obedience, but if we choose to fellowship those who hate the Cross, we can expect to share their destiny which is destruction. The little suffering that we find walking the Crucified Way will be nothing in comparison to the eternal suffering which awaits the enemies of the Cross.

## **2. Their God is Their Belly**

These people never fast, never deny themselves in this life. If we listen to our belly, we will never fast, for the belly has a very limited vocabulary. First it cries, "Give me food and drink." Then it says, "Give me more food and more drink," When Jesus spoke concerning His second coming, He said:

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:34-36).

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is as certain as the reality of His first coming. Yet, many will be led astray by those who undermine the preaching of the Cross with their doctrine of self-indulgence. The flesh has an insatiable appetite which is brought under the control of the spiritual man only as we pass through special seasons of fasting and prayer. Although self-denial is painful to the flesh, it is, nevertheless, needful for those who desire to be ready at the coming of the Lord.

## **3. Glory in Their Shame**

Sin brought shame into the world, yet these feel no shame or remorse. Instead of glorying in the blessed Cross of Christ, instead of repenting of their sinful deeds, these

enemies glory in the very thing which made them shameful in God's eyes.

As a minister I have dealt with situations where someone had stolen another person's mate and gloried in the fact. Instead of feeling ashamed before the Lord, they went around gloating over the matter. Most all will agree that this is a pitiful condition for any soul, yet Christians can be guilty of the same transgression in a lesser degree.

How many times, for example, has our flesh come up and said, "no one is going to run over me." Then we proceed to give what is commonly called *a piece of our mind*. Do we repent at the foot of the Cross for our unChrist-like attitude, or do we rehearse the matter to anyone who will listen? All too frequently we glory in our shame before going to the Cross in repentance.

Beloved, our own carnal flesh is the greatest enemy of the Cross that any of us will suffer. Thank God that we have a place where we can crucify every carnal attitude and disposition that rises up to glory in its shame.

#### **4. Mind Earthly Things**

The enemies of the Cross can tell you every program on TV; they are walking news commentators, but they never have time to read the Word of God. Prayer time is forgotten as they talk for hours on the phone. The Cross will faithfully expose these earthly things that draw our hearts and minds away from Him.

#### **D. THE SHAME OF THE CROSS**

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down

at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Many people run well for a season but draw back when they face the shame that is connected with the Cross. Jesus' death represented the most shameful death possible, for it is written, "...Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). As far as the world was concerned, the Cross was the sign of absolute failure. A man, claiming to be the Son of God, claiming to have power to destroy the temple and raise it up in three days, poured out His last drop of blood before the eyes of a jeering crowd. To the unbelievers, Jesus' death was no different than that of the two thieves who hung on each side of Him. Man looks at the Cross and sees only the humiliation and the shame.

One day, however, all the world will behold the glorious victory that Jesus bought as He hung on Calvary's Cross. Through humiliation and shame He stands triumphant over all the powers of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. His victory makes it possible for us to also endure the shame that we feel as our flesh hangs on the Cross of Christ. Friends and loved ones may mistake our humiliation for failure, but gaining victory over the flesh is not failure. It is the greatest victory known to man.

Thus, we have seen the suffering of the Cross which includes: A. The Offense of the Cross, B. The Persecution of the Cross, C. The Enemies of the Cross, and D. The Shame of the Cross. All the suffering represents only one fourth of the full stature of the Cross. Jesus never asks us to bear the suffering until He has shown us the rewards and the power of the Cross. Then, after we fellowship the suffering, Jesus brings us to the glory of the Cross.

#### IV. THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

The word *glory* means to rejoice, to boast, to be full of joy. The ability to glory in nothing except the Cross does not come the moment that we pick up the Cross. To the contrary, our flesh feels the pain as the Cross kicks against it, and the world has many things which still entice and lure us from the narrow pathway of holiness. We still boast about our connections in the world, and rejoice in worldly possessions.

As we go on for God, however, and embrace the fullness of the Cross, the world is crucified to us and we are crucified to it. The Cross becomes such a living reality in our lives that we become completely dead to the things of the world. The Cross becomes the glory, the joy, the thrill and delight of our lives. We reach the place where the Cross means more than all the world.

The Cross is real, and the Crucified Way is real because it is the way that Jesus Christ walked. He is the Living Cross, the Living Way. Therefore, we make no apologies to the modernists for calling the walk with Jesus Christ the Crucified Way. Those who walk the Crucified Way find that the reward, the power, and the glory of the Cross far outweigh the suffering.

## **NO REASON TO FEAR**

Each person is a unique individual; nevertheless, he shares his fears with every human that has ever been born. Fear is a constant, if not conscious, companion from the cradle to the grave. Patients whose physical problems stem from fears of one kind or another crowd our hospitals, nursing homes, and mental institutions. All too frequently doctors treat only the physical disturbance and send the patient home to continue wrestling with the fears which originally mastered him.

Must we cringe and tremble all the days of our short life? Are fears the lot and fate of man? Have we no hope of ever getting victory over the torment that fear brings? Yes! Hope and victory lies in Jesus Christ who conquered man's fears. Many people know Jesus suffered and died on Calvary's Cross, descending into hell itself to pay the price for man's redemption. Few, however, realize that He also experienced every fear known to man in order to prove the fallacy of our fears. Christ overcame the seven basic fears of man as he suffered the seven degrees of humiliation which the Apostle Paul mentions in Philippians.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

•In these three short verses, God unfolds the sevenfold picture or steps of the humility of Christ. Seven is the number of completion; thus, He gave a complete picture of the stairway of humility that Jesus Christ descended. As followers of Christ, God gives all believers an opportunity to walk down the same stairway of humility. In the low and humble place He hides His priceless treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones. Because of fear and pride, many refuse to surrender to the blessed Holy Ghost to lead them down this stairway and fail to ever possess His precious treasure of humility.

Let us now consider the stairway of humility along with the fear that Jesus faced on each step.

## **I. MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION**

Jesus made Himself of no reputation, or in other words, empty, vain, void, of none effect. He became poor that we might be made rich.

The human heart fears poverty in the economic realm, in the social realm, and in the religious realm. The greed of the human heart reaches out to possess in all these areas. The fear of poverty furnishes fertile ground for many plants and trees of the flesh such as strife, hatred, and murder.

## A. POVERTY IN THE ECONOMIC REALM

Although the fear of poverty in the economic realm frequently manifests itself in subtle ways, it is an unmerciful taskmaster. Women, for example, say, "I don't have a thing to wear," when they really mean they do not want to be seen in the same old dress again. Their husbands buy new cars because they are afraid others will think them POOR if they continue driving last year's model. The wealthy buy houses and land and entertain lavishly for the same reason.

True happiness is not dependent upon how many dresses or cars or houses we own. Nevertheless, man seems to go through the torment of the damned when he faces poverty. To prove that man has nothing to fear from poverty, Jesus Christ made Himself of no reputation and through humility overcame the fear of poverty. No man will ever be asked to take such a great step down as Jesus took for us, nor can we ever experience any poverty that compares with the step of poverty He stood on for us.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7).

Pride would demand that the Son of God be wrapped in fine linen and be laid in the palace where servants could minister to His every need. By contrast, Mary wrapped the King of Humility in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. The only begotten Son of God left all the honor and reputation He enjoyed in heaven to become a tiny babe in Mary's arms. On the first step of humility, Jesus Christ went far beyond natural poverty which the swaddling

clothes pictured. Swaddling clothes made of natural substances wrapped only his physical body. It was the fleshly body itself that swaddled the Christ. Only Christ, the Living Word of God, can ever know the poverty His human body represented. He, who had known omnipresence, accepted the limitations of a body so small that He was forced to depend upon others to carry Him about. Beloved, Christ knew natural poverty in the economic realm to prove that our fears are groundless. Furthermore, He accepted the greater humiliation and poverty of a human body that we might face poverty, however humiliating, unafraid. Happiness consists not in the abundance of things which we possess.

## **B. POVERTY IN THE SOCIAL REALM**

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23).

Fear of social poverty repeatedly directs our choice of friends, as well as the location of our house and the size of our car that we drive. Society looks down on those who possess little in the way of worldly goods. Fear smothers many acts of Christian love; it causes us to draw back in shame from those whom we consider to be beneath us socially. Hard and cruel is the fear of social poverty.

God's will and glory never depend upon the high places of this world. To the contrary, Jesus told the Pharisees, "...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). God bypassed the king's palace in Jerusalem when He brought His Son into the world, preferring a manger in Bethlehem. As the Mes-

siah, Christ might have chosen to live in Jerusalem, the city of King David's exaltation, but He dwelt instead in a small despised place called Nazareth. He became poor socially speaking. Christ grew up unknown to the world in a village of such ill report that when Nathanael heard where the Messiah came from, he scoffed, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth" (John 1:46). What glorious love Jesus had for fallen man. While living in Nazareth, Jesus not only fulfilled prophecy, but also ruled over the fear of social poverty. Neither economic nor social poverty kept Jesus Christ from fulfilling the will of God for His life.

### **C. RELIGIOUS POVERTY**

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus was spiritually poor according to the church crowd of His day. With the leaders of Israel He had no prestige. He burned with zeal to please His Father and not the people.

Many times human pride feeds the poverty fearing ground of the heart causing people to say, "I'm not going to make a fool out of myself." Beloved, if we would enter the hidden mine of gold, silver, and precious stones, then we must go by the first step of poverty. Many times we have seen people stand on the first step of poverty, the loss of reputation, and watched them draw back from following the deeper way of the Christ because their reputation was at stake. The Apostle Paul testified of walking on this step of humiliation. "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are hon-

ourable, but we are despised" (I Corinthians 4:10).

Today many Christians cling to earthly wisdom rather than endure spiritual poverty for a season. The true revelation of God's Word is not always precious to everyone who hears. After Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53), many of His disciples ceased to follow Him. They rejected the truth in favor of the doctrines of the day. Fear still prompts the same reaction. Men let fear for their reputation and position in the church world keep them from following the lowly Nazarene down the stairway of humility.

Flesh always rebels against the doctrines of the cross. It quickly denounces the Crucified Way, saying, "Jesus wants us to have life and have it more abundantly." Words fail us and we become poor, as it were, when we try to explain that God's abundant life is found as we walk the way of crucifixion. Our flesh suffers much when those who once loved us cast us out as spiritually poor and ignorant. Only the Spirit of God can crucify this realm of fear and pride that resents taking the poverty step with Jesus. Beloved, our hearts will break and our pride crumble once we glimpse the degree of spiritual poverty Jesus Christ walked through for us.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God, All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3).

The Christ who spoke the worlds into being, who was ALL WORD, Living Word, Omnipresent Word, was reduced to expressing Himself through the vocabulary of a babe. The Word became speechless, as it were. He became com-

pletely dependent upon one of His own creation to interpret His cries and minister to His needs. Such humility staggers the mind. When Jesus walked the Crucified Way for us, He did it all alone. We have nothing to fear; He only asks us to fellowship a small portion of His humiliation,

## **II. TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT**

The form of a servant means the adjustment of parts, a slave. How perfectly does the thought of being a servant fit with the second basic fear of the human heart which is the fear of old age. We fear old age because it represents the loss of power and independence. While possessing youth and strength, we can more or less govern our own lives. Young men, for example, may walk away from working conditions that older men must think twice about before leaving. As our earning power diminishes, the possibility of becoming dependent upon someone else increases. Human frailty often weakens us until others have complete authority over our lives. This thought is exceedingly painful to our pride.

A lifetime passes quickly; suddenly, it seems, we face old age. Driven by the fear of old age, the world pours millions of dollars annually into the cosmetic industry. Women paint their eyes, their cheeks, and their lips. They color their hair, fingernails, and toenails in a futile attempt to hold on to the seductive powers of youth just a little longer. The same fear sells diet pills, weight lifting equipment, and even wigs to the men. Both men and women strive to prove in one way or another that they still possess power to cause others to bow in admiration. We hate the thought of being a servant to youth.

The first two books of the New Testament unveil the heights and the depths of Christ. Matthew portrays Jesus

as king, while Mark reveals Him as a servant. All the host of heaven served Jesus Christ, the King of kings, yet He left this exalted place to take the lowly position of a servant to conquer the fear of old age.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28).

No natural king ever asks his servant, "Would you like to work here, or would you prefer serving over there?" The king only speaks, and the servant obeys. If obedience is the servant's duty to a natural king, how much greater is our obligation to our spiritual King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Piously we sing, "King of my life, I crown thee now." It is another matter, however, when Jesus assumes His rightful authority in our lives. Pride greatly resents and rebelliously resists standing on the servant's step. The command to serve usually comes when we are too busy, too tired, or it is too late. Never is it convenient to be a servant. Jesus said, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth! (Luke 22:27). Surely, the humility of Christ should work surrender and obedience in our hearts.

Occasionally, if the choice of whom we serve is left in our hands, we will accept the position of a servant. We may serve the minister and his family. We may serve someone

we love, but we show much less interest in serving the widows, the orphans, and those of little importance. Fear that someone will make a servant out of us fills our proud human heart. Beloved, we were lost sinners on our way to hell until Jesus, the Son of God, took the low and humble place of a servant so He could redeem us. The servant's place is much too good for us. Standing on the lowest rung of this step of humility, Jesus served Judas Iscariot, the man who only moments later went out to betray Him. Lord, forgive us for our pride.

How precious and glorious when the human soul grows in His great divine love that constrains us, with joy, to take the place of a servant. In the natural man struggles to avoid taking the servant's place in his old age. By contrast, the spiritual man labors to enter into the humble place of a servant so that he may fellowship Christ. The greatest servant of all time and eternity aside from the Lord Jesus Christ, will be the Bride of Jesus Christ. We can never, however, serve in the New City unless Jesus has delivered us from the fear of being a servant, the fear of losing our independence. Beloved, Jesus must rule as King in our lives now if we want to reign with Him throughout eternity.

### **III. MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN**

In order to feel the temptations of man, Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of man. He took on the internal weakness and frailty of flesh, being made similar in appearance and character, yet without sin.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

The fear of criticism is the third basic fear of the human heart. This fear shakes man to the foundation of his being. It produces much variance and strife. We not only bitterly hate the unkind remark, but also direct much animosity against the one who dared criticize us. Contrary to all the laws of humility, we let our wounded pride fight back with more criticism. Criticism belittles and destroys the wares and goods of others while justifying itself for doing it. No man ever suffered greater criticism than Jesus Christ, yet He never once allowed the fear of criticism to cause Him to sin.

Those who should have known Jesus best spoke words of doubt instead of praise, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him..." (Matthew 13:55-57). In other words, "Who does he think he is? Why he is a nobody." Moreover, Jesus suffered from the covetous Pharisees who derided Him (Luke 16:14). The word *derided* in the Greek means to sneer outright at. The Pharisees had no respect for His person or they would not have sneered and laughed in His face. Many of the Jews said, "...He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" (John 10:20). They numbered the holy Son of God among the transgressors and accused the Living Word, the Truth, of being a liar. They belittled His omnipotent power by saying he was too helpless to redeem even Himself.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come

down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save (Mark 15:28-31).

Such undeserved criticism would cause most of us to call fire down out of heaven upon our enemies if we had the power to do so. Jesus, however, ruled over fear when He stood on the step of criticism. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:23).

Man has three realms of carnality. The first is visible to everyone, including ourselves. People with violent tempers, for instance, have no problem agreeing with others that they possess this realm of flesh. The second realm is discernible to others but is hidden from our own eyes. What we *call determination* may be labeled stubbornness and self-will by others. Our *concern* may cause people to call us a prying busybody. The third realm of flesh is the kind that only God can see. Only He can draw back the veil which hides the depths and heights of pride motivating our actions.

Beloved, man's words have no power to change the truth. Unjust criticism never turned Jesus into the Devil; it never made Him a liar. Neither can criticism make us guilty when we are innocent. It can, however, stir up our flesh and cause us to get a bitter, unforgiving spirit against the one who criticized us. On the other hand, we can profit from criticism when we understand that God, many times, permits us to stand on the step of criticism to open our eyes to the second realm of flesh. He lets others criticize us in order to humble our hearts before Him. If we honestly lay the criticism out before the Lord, He will open our eyes to see exactly how much of the accusation is fair.

If the criticism is just, God may say, "Yes, you are stubborn and stiff-necked. Yes, you are a gossip." Beloved, criticism opens a whole new realm of repentance to us. Since we can only repent of sin in our lives as it is made known to us, let us not despise criticism when it comes our way. If God shows us the criticism is unjust, it gives us an opportunity to commit our souls into the hands of the Judge who will deal righteously with our enemies.

Jesus exhorted and testified that the low place was, indeed, a blessed place. In the low place of humility before God we find the wonderful treasure of the gold, silver, and precious stones.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:11,12).

We can never know the rejoicing and exceeding gladness until God's plow of humility breaks up the fallow ground of pride and fear. After He sows our hearts with the flowers of His love, criticism means only benefit and blessing to our spiritual man.

#### **IV. FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN**

Jesus Christ not only took on the internal frailties of man, but He also accepted all the external weakness of a human body. Standing on this step of humiliation, He conquered man's fear of the loss of someone's love. This fear causes more agony and trouble for the human race than any of the other fears. It turns the avenues of the

world, the church, and the individual into hellish nightmares.

In the business world the employer fears losing the loyalty of his employees. At the same time, the employee lives in constant fear of losing the favor of his superiors. Fear continues to manifest itself in the office and factory as friends strive among themselves for the title of *most popular* or in other words, *most loved*.

Fear of the loss of love grows similarly in the hearts of God's children. What a heaven on earth the visible church would be if this fear was already eradicated from the hearts of believers. However, since carnality still exists in the hearts of Christians, the Devil stirs up the ground of fear, hoping to cause division and disunity in the body of Christ. Denominations pull one against another, each seeking to add to its list of followers. Pastors fear losing the love and loyalty of their congregation to some other pastor or evangelist. Fear of the loss of love rules also in the hearts of the congregation, causing the individual members to suspect that the pastor loves someone else more than he loves them. Fear sustains and nourishes many feelings of bitterness and ill will among God's people.

Fear works in families. Mothers and fathers each fear that the children will love the other more. Children envy one another. In fact, much quarreling between brothers and sisters can be traced directly to this fear. The fear of the loss of personal love produces the crudest form of jealousy. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; *jealousy is cruel as the grave*: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6). When this fear grows to maturity in the human heart it causes some men to kill the object of their love rather than to face losing that love to another. The same fear causes others to kill

with their tongues. With words, instead of guns, they slay the name, the reputation, and the honor of one to whom they once rendered love and loyalty.

In order to restore the love relationship between God and man, Jesus Christ was found in the fashion of a man. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). Without this fashioning as a man, Jesus could never have been a mediator. Neither could He have known or tasted the fears and temptations of the human heart. Because He tasted of these fears and temptations, He is able to succor those who need help. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

While in heaven, Jesus knew the Father's love and in addition received love and worship from the holy angels. Yet He accepted a human body, an inferior body that He might redeem fallen man. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). What greater humiliation could our precious Jesus suffer? He, who was the very creator of all things, humbled Himself and took upon Himself the fashion of His very own creation. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh*, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16). Jesus might have refused the fleshly body, saying, "My Father will be ashamed of me, and the angels will cease to worship me." But instead of losing heaven's love, Jesus made it possible for poor lost man to join the angels in worship. Both heaven and earth can adore Him now because He ruled in humility over the fear of the loss of love.

All fear has its roots in the tree of pride. Man loathes

to leave the high place for the lower position. Beloved, the disease of pride can be cured with the medicine of humility. Jesus taught us to take the LOWEST place and wait for the King to say, "Come higher friend." It is impossible to get lower than the lowest. This is, therefore, the most blessed place. In the lowest place is no fear of falling, no fear of loss. The carnality of the mind is such an enemy of the humble mind of Christ, that the human heart fails to see or appreciate the lowest place until the Holy Ghost leads us to find His precious jewels of humility. Then the heart leaps for joy and praises God for every persecution and trial that He used to bring us to the low place.

Jesus knows how it feels to be forsaken by those who should have loved Him most. He is able, therefore, to deliver us from the fear of the loss of someone's love. As we submit ourselves into His hands, He will give us unfailing, undying love. No mortal love compares with the love of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. His is the only perfect love. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:18,19). After this truth penetrates our hearts, after we realize that the love of Christ is sufficient, we willingly surrender to lose all natural loves, if necessary, in order to obtain His love,

## **V. HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF**

To humble the self means to abase the self, to bring self low, to depress, humiliate in condition or heart, humiliate in circumstances or disposition, base, cast down, low degree, low estate. More specifically, it traces back to a word meaning the low feelings of the mind as well as the body. Not only did the Christ humble Himself by leaving

His high and holy position in heaven, but He also yielded His fleshly body for all the humiliation necessary for Him to take our sins and our diseases. As He felt the humiliation of our physical and mental sufferings, He ruled over the fear of suffering.

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses (Matthew 8:16,17).

Fear of suffering keeps many people from believing God for healing. It is impossible for faith and fear to flow through the human heart at the same time. Because fear is an enemy of faith, it must be dealt with first. Men doubt God's merciful nature, the faithfulness of His Word and His power to deliver when fear fills the heart. We distrust God's nature, thinking He will put more suffering or heartache on us than we can bear in either the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm. Only after we humble our hearts and surrender our fears, can faith flow out to possess what Jesus purchased with His Blood. Faith lays hold of the promises of God and knows that, "...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). When fear is gone we step into a whole new realm of liberty.

The church of the first century learned how to rejoice while standing on the step of suffering. They knew glorious victory over fear as they counted it a privilege to suffer in their bodies for the Lord Jesus Christ. "...and when they

had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:40-42).

From the very beginning God introduced the Apostle Paul to the suffering he could expect if he followed Jesus Christ. "But the Lord said unto him, [Ananias] Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15,16). Paul later testified about some of the sufferings he encountered, saying:

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? (II Corinthians 11:24-29).

Did Paul despise the sufferings? No! To the contrary, he said, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities" (II Corinthians 11:30). In

spite of all the perils and pains he suffered, Paul never allowed them to separate him from the Lord or from the way of the cross. At the end of his life, Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:7,8).

Fear of suffering moved the Apostle Peter to deny the Lord Jesus at His crucifixion. We know that he later learned to rule over fear because his first epistle speaks much about the subject of suffering. History tells us that Peter requested to be crucified head downward, saying he counted himself unworthy to suffer as his Lord.

Beloved, we have nothing to fear from suffering. Christ suffered body, soul, and spirit for us; at Calvary's cross He paid the supreme sacrifice. Nothing we face is comparable to the suffering He endured while He walked this earth in a fleshly body. When He drives this fear from our heart, we can possess His promises and walk in His liberty.

## **VI. BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH**

Man fears death because, again, he lacks faith in the Word of God and the nature of God. The river of death presents to the human heart the problem of the unknown. We draw back from the unknown thinking death might be lurking around some dark corner; it might be waiting around the next curve in the road. We are afraid if we die, God will not be good enough to raise us up as He promised. Because Israel never really believed in God's nature of mercy, she feared to trust her life into the hand of God. Continually she accused Him of bringing her out of Egypt to kill her. Was Israel's charge against God true? Of course not. His

Word clearly shows His real motive and purpose in leading Israel out of Egypt.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: *And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.* And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, *for our good always, that he might preserve us alive,* as it is at this day (Deuteronomy 6:20-24).

God mercifully brought Israel out into the wilderness and led her into Canaan's Land because He wanted to preserve her alive throughout eternity. Had Israel remained in Egypt, she might have died under the weight of the burdens the Egyptians put on her, or she might have become corrupted by their heathen idolatrous worship. In the latter case she would have shared in the Egyptian's punishment which would be spiritual death in the pit (Ezekiel 31:16-18). Great is God's goodness and His mercy; never does He lead us a harder way than we need to come.

How blessed when the heart and soul has been delivered from this fear. We can then lie back with joy and ecstasy in the arms of Christ, The Apostle Paul experienced this as his love for Jesus grew greater and greater. At the last, Paul lived so much in the heavenlies that he desired to de-

part and be with Christ. It mattered little to Paul whether he lived or died; he desired only that Christ might be magnified. How precious when He sets our hearts aflame with a divine passion to magnify HIM whether by life or by death.

The fear of death keeps us from tasting of the ecstasy of God's love in this manner, Jesus Christ, however, never drew back from death. To the contrary, He said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). Jesus promised if we would lose our life for His sake, we would find it again. If we lay our life down He will raise it up. No place Jesus ever leads us is unknown to Him; He walked down every step of humility ahead of us. He is the only man who walked all the way down into death and hell and took the keys out of the Devil's hand. Today, the Living Resurrected Christ holds the keys of death and hell. Thus, we need not fear death in either the natural or the spiritual realm.

Beloved, as Jesus takes the fear of death out of our souls, we can offer ourselves unto Him for new crucifixion and death to our flesh. Every time Jesus sees the waters of death close over our fleshly man, He raises us up with new resurrection power and glory. Death is but the doorway to LIFE-Jesus waits in love on the other side. "...Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15:54,55).

## **VII. EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS**

This means a voluntary offering up of the flesh for the thorns, for the jeers, for the nails, and then by free will laying one's life down. Lastly, but certainly not the least of man's fears, is the fear of failure in the eyes of the world.

Failure is much less painful if no one knows about it. But the death of our Saviour did not happen in some secret, hidden corner. They lifted Jesus up between heaven and earth and made Him a spectacle before all the visible and invisible creatures of heaven and earth. He took the place of apparent failure before men.

God's Word tells us that the cross carried a special curse. "...Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). No other death could, therefore, portray such complete failure. As far as the world was concerned, the cross represented the greatest failure of all time. The disciples must have shared this feeling, for they returned totally disillusioned to their nets.

While the world saw only a man hanging on a cross, God beheld the complete surrender of His Son, Jesus Christ. Here was a man who all the days of His life kept His human will in subjection to the divine will of God. Never once did Jesus exercise His human will to redeem Himself, not even from the final humiliation of death upon a cross. Regardless of how man looks at Calvary, the cross is the greatest VICTORY of all time and eternity. To redeem fallen man, Jesus Christ paid the greatest price ever paid. He did it by walking down every step of humility and dying the most shameful death on Calvary's Cross. The cross still bears a shame, but eternity will reveal its glory and honor. Only then will the world see the exaltation Jesus will have because He willingly walked the stairway of humility in this life.

All our fears are rooted in pride of temporal things. We can hold on to our wealth and reputation only as long as we live. At death these things pass to others. Years before we die the powers of youth fade. Moreover, many can testify concerning the fickleness of man's praise as well as his natural love. Only fools hope to escape suffering and

death. We may cling to our pride all the days of our life, but we will face eternity empty handed because the grave separates from all natural success gained in this life.

Great folly causes man to measure success or failure by the size of the work or ministry he can see. He bases his judgment on temporal things, but God uses no such measurement. True success is determined by how far we allow Jesus Christ to lead us down the stairway of humility that He walked. Eternal success and exaltation depends upon how far we let our human wills be brought under subjection to God's holy divine will.

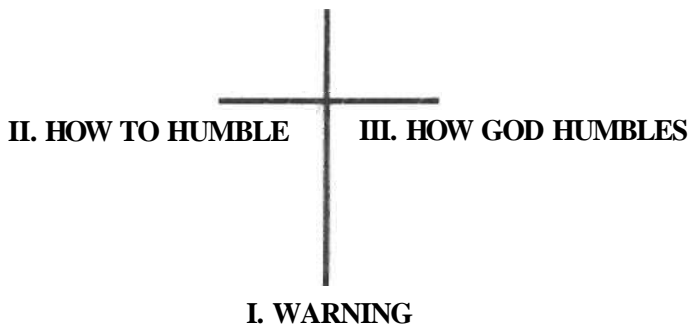
Our final abode will be an eternal witness to the measure of true success we attained in this life. Some will live in the new heavens wearing white robes (Revelation 7:9-15). Others will wear white raiment and dwell upon the new earth (Revelation 4:4; 5:8-10). In disgrace and shame, some will spend eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-15). But the Bride of Jesus Christ wears white linen and dwells throughout eternity in the New City, the holy Jerusalem (Revelation 19:8). The whole world will see the glory, the beauty, and the unity the Bride gained as she followed the Lamb down the stairway of humility. Thus, she is privileged to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth for all eternity. Great is the power of humility; we have nothing to fear. Precious Jesus, make us willing to walk this stairway of humility with YOU.

Thus, we have seen the seven basic fears of man: the fear of poverty, the fear of old age, the fear of criticism, the fear of the loss of love, the fear of illness and suffering, the fear of death, and the fear of failure. All these fears are overcome by the seven degrees of humility of Jesus Christ. May we ever seek to know the humility of Jesus Christ and thereby overcome our fears.

## **THE INESCAPABLE DECISION**

After accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, the next greatest decision usually involves humility. Humility is the ability to condescend, to get down low. In God's sight it is such a priceless treasure that He gives each individual an opportunity to choose to forsake the way of pride and walk down the stairway of humility with Christ Jesus. Humiliation is unavoidable; we must face it in this life or in eternity. It behooves us, therefore, to consider what God's Word has to say on the subject.

### **IV. POWER OF HUMILITY**



## **I. WARNING**

Humility is so repulsive to the flesh that people sometimes spend entire lifetimes trying to avoid the low place. God's Word tells of four men who refused to humble themselves before the Lord. Although all of these men lived during the Old Testament dispensation, they provide excellent examples for us. If we choose to follow in their pride and rebellion, we can expect to share their judgment, for God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

### **A. PHARAOH**

And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me (Exodus 10:3).

God sent His servants, Moses and Aaron, to ask Pharaoh how long he was going to refuse to bow to the will of God. In spite of the various plagues that God sent upon the land of Egypt because of his rebellion, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to humble himself and accept the loss of his slaves. What price did he pay for his pride? Pharaoh and all of Egypt suffered the loss of their firstborn. This was no small loss, for not one family escaped without a death. Even the beasts belonging to the Egyptians lost their firstborn on the night that the death angel passed over. Perhaps the death of his own son, or fear of rebellion from the people caused Pharaoh to relent temporarily.

God will be in debt to no man. Just imagine the blessing and prosperity that God would have given to Pharaoh in exchange for his slaves. But Pharaoh refused to wait in

humility for God to repay him for the loss that he suffered when Israel obeyed God's will. Repenting of his decision to let the children of Egypt go, Pharaoh set out with his army to bring them back into captivity. This last course of action cost Pharaoh his life spiritually as well as naturally. He died without having another opportunity to humble himself before the Lord. Death is the consequence of refusing to bow our knees and our hearts to the will of the living God.

Pharaoh's death leaves no reason to accuse the nature or the mercy of God. From the very beginning, Moses and Aaron declared God's will to Pharaoh and gave him an opportunity to willingly humble his heart. Instead of bowing in humility, Pharaoh hardened his heart against God's will and purpose for Israel. Beloved, when God's will touches the lives of those close to us, we have an opportunity to accept that will gracefully. But if we refuse to humble ourselves, then we can expect the next thing that came to Pharaoh—afflictions and death.

## **B. AMON**

Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and *humbled not himself before the LORD*, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more (II Chronicles 33:21-23).

Amon's father, Manasseh, set an evil example before his son. Manasseh knew the reality of the God of Israel,

yet his son grew up surrounded by idol worship, witchcraft, and wizards (II Chronicles 33:1-6). What folly Manasseh wrought by backsliding on God. When God allowed him to be captured by the king of Assyria, Manasseh humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and knew that the LORD was God (verses 12,13). Although Arnon witnessed the judgment that befell his father, he never let it work the fear of God in his own heart. His father repented and commanded all of Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel, but Arnon continued to do evil in the Lord's sight even after he was made king and leader of the people. His position of exaltation and authority lasted for only two years. "And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house" (II Chronicles 33:24). What good did his false gods do him? Not one of the carved images that he served could save him from the humiliation of being murdered by his own servants.

Amon's father fell into the hands of his enemy, but he did not die in Babylon because he humbled himself before the Lord and repented of his idolatry. God, in His grace and mercy, brought Manasseh back to Jerusalem where he had an opportunity to right some of the wrong that he had done, Amon followed his father in his wickedness but not in his humility. Refusing to accept the mercy and forgiveness that God has for idolators, Amon died in proud rebellion without ever humbling his heart.

We may not worship graven images in the natural, but we bow down to many false mental images. Very frequently, for example, *the gospel according to us*, reads contrary to the truth found in God's Word. It is humiliating to confess that we are wrong, that we have been worshipping false gods, false ideas and opinions, but this humiliation is

less than the humiliation of dying in our sin and going out to face a holy God unforgiven. Let us hear God's warning and humble our hearts while there is time.

### C. ZEDEKIAH

Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and *humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD*. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel (II Chronicles 36:11-13).

God's judgment had already fallen upon Israel. Zedekiah's eight-year-old brother, Jehoiachin, had served as king for only three months and ten days before being carried away captive into Babylon. One would expect the twenty-one-year-old Zedekiah to have been humbled by the judgment that covered the land and by the tremendous responsibility that the kingship represented. This, however, was not the case. The Word of God says that he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the very man who had raised him to the position of king. In modern language, he would be called a nationalist, but since God was using King Nebuchadnezzar to correct His children, the Lord called his action rebellion. Rebellion takes many forms, but it is always directed against God Himself. By seeking to overthrow the authority of King Nebuchadnezzar and establish his own rule, Zedekiah revealed his inner rebellion against God's authority over him. He made his rebellion even plainer by

ignoring God's own words which came through the prophet Jeremiah. Instead of leading Israel to repent of her sins as the Lord commanded, he led her into the abominations of the heathen. Deceived by Zedekiah's promises of freedom from authority in the natural and in the spiritual, Israel walked straight into greater humiliation, into death and captivity in a foreign land.

Therefore he [God] brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia;" (II Chronicles 36:17-20).

If Zedekiah and Israel had humbled themselves and accepted God's authority in the form of Nebuchadnezzar and God's Word as it came through Jeremiah, they might have been the ones who were privileged to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. As it was, they were forced to accept the authority and the word of the foreign king and his sons.

The carnal mind says that it is unfair for God to punish all those people because one man refused to humble himself. Let us look at the other side of the story before

passing unjust judgment. One man, Christ Jesus, dared to humble Himself and walk down the stairway of humility to die on the cross of Calvary. Consider, now, how many people have been blessed by this one man's life of humility. The Apostle Paul said, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself (Romans 14:7). Whether we know it or not, someone is watching our lives. In one way or another, we are all leaders and therefore responsible to humble ourselves to God's authority and God's Word in every situation. Someone else will follow the pathway of humility if we will walk it before them.

If God required Zedekiah to humble himself to a wicked, ungodly, heathen king, surely we have no excuse for failing to humble our hearts in the trying circumstances of life. If God required the king of Judah to accept His authority and His Word as it came through man, then who are we to demand a personal visitation from the Lord before we believe? In hell the rich man saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and requested that Lazarus be resurrected from the dead so that he might be a personal witness to his brothers, but he had to humble himself and accept the witness that God had provided for them. Abraham said, "...If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Just as Zedekiah was accountable for the Word which came through the mouth of Jeremiah, so also are we accountable for the Word. Humility and sincere love for the truth will cause us to accept and obey His Word regardless of whether it comes from Him personally or through other human beings.

## **D. BELSHAZZAR**

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone (Daniel 5:1-4).

Belshazzar was the son or the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar, the man who sought to usurp glory and honor which rightfully belonged to God. "The king [Nebuchadnezzar] spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Judgment for such pride came quickly.

While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to these it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee...The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws" (Daniel 4:31-33).

After seven years of humiliation, the king's understanding returned and he testified:

...I blessed the most High, and I praised and honour him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?... Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (Daniel 4:34-37).

Even this personal testimony from one in his immediate family did not influence Belshazzar to humble himself before the one true God. Belshazzar's very name declared whom he considered the supreme deity. The name *Belshazzar* means Bel protect the king. Bel was the name of the god most revered by the Babylonians. In spite of Nebuchadnezzar's witness to the contrary, Belshazzar continued to rely on this impotent god for protection. His stubborn refusal to accept the divinity of God led Belshazzar to offend the only One who had power to judge him for defiling the holy vessels which had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Fearlessly Belshazzar allowed his heathen friends, his wives and concubines to drink wine out of vessels consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. While drinking wine out of holy cups, they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. This caused Belshazzar's cup of iniquity to become full. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over

against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote" (Daniel 5:5). Great fear filled his heart when he saw the fingers of the hand write on the wall, but Belshazzar clung to his idolatrous way and called first for the astrol-ogers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. He sent for Daniel, the prophet of the Lord, only after the wise men of the kingdom acknowledged their inability to interpret the writing.

Rejecting the promised reward, Daniel began rehearsing all the opportunities that God had given the king to humble himself during and after the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation. He ended by saying:

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: (Daniel 5:22,23).

As Daniel interpreted the strange words, Belshazzar heard the price that he would pay for refusing to humble himself and give glory and honor to the true and living God.

And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered

thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:25-28).

Nothing in the Word of God indicates that Belshazzar humbled himself after hearing the decree. To the contrary, he proceeded to make Daniel third ruler in the kingdom that God had just said had been taken from him. This fact alone seems to reveal continued defiance. Belshazzar thought that he could defy the living God and get by, but he forfeited his life that very night. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (Daniel 5:30,31). Once again death and captivity is the result of failing to humble oneself.

Humility before the Lord is a vital and inescapable issue. All through His Word, God reminds us of the seriousness of failing to willingly humble our hearts.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: (Isaiah 2:11,12).

And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness (Isaiah 5:15,16).

Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled (Isaiah 10:33).

God gives these warnings because the decision to humble ourselves in this life has a direct bearing on our eternal destination and reward. Jesus Christ willingly humbled Himself, going down into deeper suffering and degradation than we can ever know, but God never left His soul in hell. On resurrection morning the glory of the Father entered into the tomb and raised Jesus from the dead. On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the Jews, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Although He passed through hell in order to do the will of God, hell was not His final abode or ultimate reward. It is sad that we cannot say the same for the four men about whom we studied. They were all kings, leaders with power and authority, but each came to a premature death and will spend eternity in hell because he refused to humble his heart before the Lord.

After seeing the importance of humility, we immediately ask, "How do I go about humbling myself?" Thank God, He never tells us to do something without leaving clear instructions which enable us to obey His command.

## **II. HOW TO HUMBLE**

God's foreknowledge caused Him to realize that Israel would need information on how to humble herself, therefore, He began giving these instructions while she was still in the wilderness. Before she was scattered by her enemies, before she was carried away captive into Babylon, Israel

received knowledge of how to behave when these things came upon her. God did not leave the important matter of humility to chance because Israel might never have sought Him for the necessary directions.

## **A. ACCEPT AND ACKNOWLEDGE**

If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: (Leviticus 26:40,41).

The instructions that God gave to Israel still apply. He warned Israel that if she walked contrary to the Word of God, she could expect to find God walking contrary to her, Israel personally made the choice which put God in an opposite position, for God never deviates from the pathway of holiness, nor does He change the truth to please the flesh. It is man who walks contrary to God's laws of righteousness. As long as Israel followed the leading of the Ark of the Covenant, she walked triumphantly, conquering every foe, whereas, her own way led into humiliation. She ended up being carried away captive into the land of Babylon.

Did God suggest that she stage a demonstration against the government in order to obtain freedom? Of course not! Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian authority but never gained the liberty that he desired. God instructed Israel to accept the punishment by confessing that her iniquity and the iniquity of her fathers had brought her to the place

of captivity.

After Israel entered into Canaan's land, Rehoboam, king of Judah, had occasion to put this first point of humility into practice, and it worked for him. God allowed Egypt's king to come in great force against Judah because Rehoboam, along with all of Israel, had forsaken the law of the Lord. Shishak and his army took the fenced cities and set their faces toward Jerusalem. As Rehoboam and his princes sat waiting for what appeared to be certain defeat, the Lord spoke through the prophet Shemaiah saying, "...Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak" (II Chronicles 12:5). Instead of quarreling with the Lord or trying to justify themselves, "...the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous" (II Chronicles 12:6).

When the Lord saw their humility, He spoke again to Shemaiah, saying, "...They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries" (II Chronicles 12:7,8).

Neither Rehoboam nor his princes pleaded for God to change His original verdict which left them in the hand of the Egyptian king; they accepted this word and acknowledged that the LORD is righteous. In other words, "We have sinned and deserve no mercy; whatever you see fit to bring upon us will be just and fair punishment." Although they deserved no mercy, their humility caused God to lessen the sentence of judgment. Shishak came against Jerusalem, but he did not destroy it as he had originally planned.

King David also exercised this principle of humility because he understood that by accepting his punishment

and acknowledging his own sin, he justified the Lord. When repenting for his sin with Bath-sheba, he said; "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (Psalm 51:3,4). And in Psalm 119:67, he said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." By saying, "I sinned before God judged," David acknowledged that God was just in His judgment which allowed affliction to come to him. But some people would rather accuse God of unrighteousness than to acknowledge their own guilt in a matter.

Job's self-justification caused Elihu to remind Job that he needed to humble himself before the Lord. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do not more" (Job 34:31,32).

The word *meet* means fit. Thus, Elihu was saying, "Job, it is fitting to justify the Lord whether you understand everything that is happening or not. Accept your punishment and acknowledge that God is holy." Beloved, we too should acknowledge God's holy, righteous nature even in situations where we are blind to our faults. Instead of saying, "Lord, You are righteous; show me where I have missed it," the flesh usually cries, "I just can't see why this happened to me." This type of murmuring is an accusation against God. Our heart is saying, "God, I deserve better treatment than I am getting. I've been so good, but You are rewarding me with evil."

Elihu's opening words in chapter 35 went right to the heart of the problem and revealed Job's spiritual pride. "...Thinkest thou, this to be right, that thou sayest, My righteousness is more than God's?" After the scales were

stripped from his eyes, Job saw his pride and cried out, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

Since God's principles never change, we can expect to find the same truth of humility being taught in the New Testament. The Apostle Peter said, "Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (I Peter 5:6). The mighty hand in this scripture refers to God's mighty hand of chastening. As a kind, loving heavenly Father, God chastens His children because He loves them, not because He desires to see them suffer needlessly. In the epistle to the Hebrews Paul wrote:

...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness (Hebrews 12:5-10).

"Despise not the chastening of the Lord," Paul said. In the Greek the word *despise* means to care little, to have little regard for, to disesteem, despise. Thus, Paul encouraged Christians to do more than accept the chastening; he taught them appreciation for it.

When we trace the word *chastening* back to its original meaning we see even more clearly why we should appreciate it. It means tutorage, that is, education or training, disciplinary correction, chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture. More specifically, it means to train up a child, that is to educate or discipline by punishment, teach.

Since every man is born into this world with a desire and a will to please SELF, he must be taught how to please God. God demonstrates His infinite love through chastening. If He had no care or concern for us He would just let us go our own willful way which would lead us to eternal destruction. As a last resort, a natural parent sometimes has to use stern discipline in order to teach a rebellious child a necessary lesson, and so it is with God. If we refuse to learn by hearing and obeying His Word, He must let trials and tribulations correct us. Chastening or punishment takes on new meaning after we realize God's purpose for sending it to us. He desires that we be partakers of his holiness. The word *partaker* means to participate, to accept and use, receive, take, eat, and have. Beloved, God wants to share His holiness with us. He wants us to have a part of His very own nature, but we will never be able to receive His holiness unless we accept His chastening first.

Our Father takes many pains to prepare the situations and circumstances which will teach us the lessons that we need to know. Let us learn to quickly accept our punishment and acknowledge His righteousness in every case.

## **B. OBEY THE WORD FROM LEADERS**

After taking office, Hezekiah's first official act was to purge, repair, and reopen the temple which had been neglected during the idolatrous reign of his father. During this month-long revival, the priests and the Levites recon-

secrated themselves and began offering sacrifices to the Lord. Then Hezekiah sent letters to all the tribes of Israel, saying:

...Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolations, as ye see. Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him (II Chronicles 30:6-9).

Israel was so backslidden at this time that she had ceased to observe the Lord's passover in Jerusalem. The ten tribes of Israel had two golden calves which they worshipped at Bethel and at Dan. Most of the people laughed in scorn as they read Hezekiah's invitation to come in the second month instead of the first month as God had commanded, but praise God, a few were sincere. Verse 11 says, "Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem."

As a nation, these people had turned their back on the

Lord, ignored His commandments, and even set up idol worship. In the natural, they had every reason to say, "It won't do any good to obey the leader this time. We didn't go to Jerusalem when God said for us to go, so why should we go now?" What authority did Hezekiah have for issuing such an invitation? How did he know that God would honor the people and accept them when they came?

Beloved, Hezekiah was more than a political figure on this occasion. He was a spiritual leader who had a revelation that God was a covenant keeping God. When he took office he practiced the first point of humility by confessing that transgressions had caused Israel to fall into disfavor with the Lord (II Chronicles 29:3-9). Then he said, "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us" (II Chronicles 29:10). Hezekiah knew about God's covenant of mercy with King David and with his son, Solomon.

...Also the LORD telleth thee [David] that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: *But my mercy shall not depart from him*, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever (II Samuel 7:11-16).

Later when dedicating the temple which God prophesied that he would build, Solomon reminded God of this covenant of mercy.

...O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart: Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou has promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and has fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day...Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: *hear thou heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive...And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; Then hear thou from the heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel*, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers ...O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: *remember the mercies of David thy servant* (II Chronicles 6:14-42).

In the very next chapter supernatural fire fell from God as a witness that God still honored His covenant with David. King Hezekiah realized that the Lord would continue to honor His covenant if Israel would do her part by turning her heart back to God. God is no liar; we never have to worry about Him doing His part if we humble ourselves before Him.

What a gazing stock the obedient Israelites must have

been as they made their way to Jerusalem. If they had gone just one month earlier, they might have been able to confess their sins secretly, for no one would have noticed them especially. However, after Hezekiah's letter which exhorted all the people to turn back to God, it was like an open confession of guilt to be seen going to Jerusalem. Beloved, it is extremely humiliating to have to admit that we have missed it completely. The flesh would almost prefer to die and go to hell rather than to go back and start over with God.

It is one thing to humble ourselves and accept our punishment as just and right, but it is something else to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God when we see no reason, apart from the testimony of our spiritual leader, for God to show mercy. Hezekiah knew a secret that the people did not know. Beloved, God does not show mercy because we are deserving, but because He is WHO HE IS. God's mercy is infinite, and it is an inseparable part of His nature.

If we have sinned, if we have missed it spiritually, our only hope is to hear and obey the words of one who says, "Come on, repent and try again. Make a new start with the Lord, He still loves you; He is just waiting for you to turn your heart back to Him."

Going back to II Chronicles, we see what God did for those who humbled themselves and obeyed the words of their leader.

Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of princes, by the word of the LORD. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. And they arose and took

away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron (II Chronicles 30:12-14).

God gave them one heart, or in other words, He gave them unity which has power to accomplish a given purpose. Although the power was misdirected, the tower of Babel shows what can be done through unity. In regard to this tower, the Lord said, "Behold the people is ONE, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do: *and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do*" (Genesis 11:6). God had to confuse their language because they had unity outside of the will of God. But the repentant Israelites had a taste of unity with God's will which had a good purpose. That purpose was to obey the commandment of the king and the princes, by the word of the Lord. When God's will is working in a heart it always affects the human will. They began to have *a will and a do* to straighten up spiritually. They started by destroying all the altars which had been erected to false gods and casting them into the brook Kidron.

In spite of the fact that many of the people were ceremonially unclean, God gave them the privilege of eating the passover lamb out of season.

For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary (II Chronicles 30:18,19).

The purpose for observing the passover was to remember God's power to deliver from death. Although the Israelites in Hezekiah's day never returned to Egypt physically, their minds went back to the night when the death angel passed through the land. Thus, they realized and acknowledged that the lamb blood was saving them from spiritual death just as it had saved the first generation of Israelites from natural death in Egypt. Israel made a new start with God by laying hold of the spiritual life that always accompanies the blood.

In addition to saving them, God also granted healing to those who had humbled themselves by obeying their spiritual leader, Hezekiah. "And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people" (II Chronicles 30:20). Beloved, God grants us new spiritual life and strength to worship and serve Him. Let us, therefore, follow the example of these Israelites. When the passover was finished, they went out and destroyed the remaining altars of idol worship.

### **C. AFFLICT SELF**

And this shall be a statute for ever unto you; that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever (Leviticus 16:29-31).

Knowing that the carnal will is the chief culprit in separating man from his God, the Lord provided a time for Israel to deal especially with the sins of her own flesh. On the Day of Atonement, Israel afflicted herself before the Lord. The Hebrew meaning of the word *afflict* is to depress, look down on or browbeat self, abase self, afflict or chasten self, humble self, deal hardly with, submit self, weaken in any wise. From the evening of the ninth day to the evening of the tenth day of the seventh month, all Israel afflicted their souls by fasting<sup>1</sup> because the Day of Atonement was a holy convocation, a day when the entire nation had to stand before the Lord.

As the nation of Israel fasted and humbled herself, the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies with the blood of atonement, the blood that had power to restore the oneness of relationship between God and His people. All those failing to humble themselves in this manner were cut off from the nation of Israel. In other words, the individuals who refused oneness of relationship with Israel's God were denied that relationship with His people,

Israel's practice of humbling herself through fasting provides a pattern for Christians to follow today. Beloved, our own flesh poses the greatest threat that we face in our journey toward spiritual maturity. Fallen Lucifer<sup>2</sup> and all of his army<sup>3</sup> cannot keep us from being one with the Lord Jesus Christ if we deal with our carnal will. Regardless of how strong our will seems or how resistant to the will of God it may be, we can humble it; we can weaken it by fasting before the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>B. R. Hicks, *Yes We Fast*, (Jeffersonville, Indiana, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>B. R. Hicks, *Lucifer*, (Jeffersonville, Indiana, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>B. R. Hicks, *Lucifer's Army*, (Jeffersonville, Indiana, 1972)

Fasting from food is very humbling because it does more than deprive our physical body of nourishment. Much of the time our fleshly carnal man is the FAT one, the STRONG one, but by denying Self the natural pleasures which it craves, we give our spiritual man an opportunity to look down on the fleshly man. Fasting does not BUY atonement from God, but it does force the flesh to assume its rightful position before God and that is the low and humble place. Fasting makes the flesh too weak to rise up in rebellion against the will of God as it usually does when opposed in any manner.

King David practiced fasting to bring the flesh under subjection. On one occasion, for example, he spoke of how his enemies lied against him. "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul" (Psalm 35:11,12). Later when his enemies became sick, he might have yielded to fleshly rejoicing over their importunity. Instead, he said, "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I *humbled my soul with fasting*; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother" (Psalm 35:13,14). David fasted and prayed for his enemies as though they were members of his own family. Beloved, when God's judgment is being poured out it is no time to let our pride rise up. God cannot and will not be one with our flesh. He judges the sins of His people as well as the transgressions of the enemy. It is vitally important, therefore, to know how to bring the flesh under subjection through fasting.

As we fast for God to mortify the deeds of our flesh, the body may cry out, "I'm starving to death; I must eat or I will die." Just remember, however, that fasting in God's

will never brought Israel to death. When we have humbled our heart sufficiently before the Lord, He will provide atonement blood for us just as He did for the nation of Israel. The blood that brought Israel back into covenant relationship with God will do the same for us.

This brings us to the fourth way that we can humble ourselves.

#### **D. BECOME LIKE A LITTLE CHILD**

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and sat him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:2-4).

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven," the disciples asked Jesus. People today might say, "The one with the most degrees after his name or the one with the largest church and the finest automobile." But how contrary to carnal thinking was Jesus' answer. Instead of encouraging His disciples in their quest for the high place, Jesus told them that their thinking must be converted. The Greek word for *converted* means to turn quite around or reverse, convert, turn self about.

The natural inclination of the flesh to seek the glory and fame of the high place begins at a very early age and is carried into adult life as men clamor to reach the top of the ladder of success.

The fleshly origin of our spiritual ambitions are sometimes more difficult to discern than the desire for natural exaltation. Beloved, spiritual exaltation does not come

through the fleshly efforts of man. In one of the Psalms we read, "Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion [exaltation, to be high) cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. *But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another*" (Psalm 75:5-7).

Jesus Christ knew that His Father is no respecter of persons and that His decision to exalt one above another is based upon the divine principle that humility precedes honor. "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; *and before honour is humility*" (*Proverbs 15:33*). God gives spiritual exaltation in proportion to one's humility.

Jesus set a little child in their midst in order to demonstrate the right way to achieve spiritual success. Since it is impossible for grown men to become small in body, Jesus had to be referring to the nature and disposition of a child's mind. Let us consider some of the qualities of a child's mind.

### **1. A Little Child is Innocent**

A little child views others as being without hostility because he has no malicious thoughts toward them. When we find ourselves suspecting everyone of talking about us or plotting against us, it is time to start humbling our mind before the Lord. It is time to get down low and realize that no enemy can come against us without our Father's permission. Repeatedly our mind must be turned from thoughts of fleshly retaliation and converted to look to our heavenly Father who assumes all responsibility for protecting His little children. Humility is making oneself a babe, making oneself low in order to honor the Father in every situation that He sees fit to choose. Great peace floods our souls when we accept the position of a child.

## **2. A little Child is Forgiving**

When his parents correct him or his friends hurt him, the little child quickly forgives and goes happily on his way. While hanging on Calvary's cross, Jesus Christ showed a forgiving spirit toward His persecutors. He cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..." (Luke 23:34). Jesus never let someone else's wrong spirit keep Him from doing His Father's will. He forgave them though they continued to torment Him.

## **3. A Little Child is Trustful**

A little child is full of trust and confidence in the integrity of his father's word and his father's nature. In one parable Jesus stressed the trusting nature of a child in order to teach His spiritual children about the nature of their heavenly Father.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, wilt he offer him a scorpion? (Luke 11:11,12).

Jesus' next remark should cause us to join the disciples in some soul searching. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Do we come trustfully to the Lord knowing that the very goodness of His nature motivates His actions? God will be faithful to His Word which says, "...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm

84:11). We need not approach God fearfully. He is a kind, loving heavenly Father who is anxious to bless His children with gifts that will help them to grow and mature spiritually.

#### **4. A Little Child is Forgetful**

People often say, "I'll forgive, but I can't forget." If we believe this we deceive ourselves because unity and harmony cannot co-exist with such a spirit.

If any man ever had a right to hate and hold a bitter feeling against another, Jesus Christ was that man. Yet while hanging on Calvary's cross Jesus showed forgiveness toward His persecutors. We can pray for God to forgive someone for the pain that they are causing us only after we have forgiven them.

Prophetically, the prophet Zechariah saw that Jesus went beyond forgiving and manifested the sweet spirit of forgetfulness toward those who crucified Him. "And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6).

When we receive a wound we call the one who gave *it enemy*. But Jesus held no grudge; He called them *friends*. Such humility from God's Son should break our hard hearts. God grant us the same spirit so that we too can call our enemies *friend*.

The knowledge of how to humble our hearts before the Lord is priceless. We humble ourselves by: A. Accepting our punishment and acknowledging God's justice; B. Obeying the Word from our leaders; C. Afflicting Self through fasting, and D. By becoming as a little child.

Let us faithfully practice humbling our heart because it is much easier to humble ourself than to wait and be humbled by the Lord.

### **III. HOW GOD HUMBLER**

Certainly God loves His creation; He has no desire to bring one unnecessary pain or suffering into any life. Hence, God's motive for humbling is pure. He knows that every creature in heaven, in earth, and under the earth shall bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10,11). Realizing that eventually every heart must get down low before the Lord, God gives the warning to humble and follows it with explicit directions of how to humble.

Some take advantage of the first opportunity to humble themselves, while others continue to walk in their own proud way. By putting the last group in humiliating circumstances, God gives them a second chance to repent of their pride before it is eternally too late. If we fail to heed God's warning to humble ourselves, we can expect to learn personally how God humbles those who will not humble themselves.

#### **A. GOD HUMBLER WITH HUNGER**

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger,  
and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not,  
neither did thy fathers know; that he might make  
them know that man doth not live by bread only,  
but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth  
of the LORD doth man live (Deuteronomy 8:3).

With their miraculous deliverance from Egypt and the Red Sea crossing still fresh in their minds, Israel began to suffer hunger in the wilderness. Instead of humbling themselves as little children and looking to their heavenly Father

to feed them, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "...Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:3). Although they seemed to direct their anger against Moses and Aaron, then true animosity and accusation was against God. "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in Egypt," they said. In other words, "We might as well have saved ourselves this long journey. God was planning to kill us anyway." This accusation was not founded on the truth. With their own mouths they confessed that the Lord had fed them all the time they were under Egyptian bondage. If God had purposed to destroy them He could have simply sat back, as it were, and let the Egyptians do the work for Him. He could have let them die as slaves in a heathen land. Instead, God showed His love and concern for the children of Israel by working miracles to start them on their journey toward Canaan's land. In spite of all the mighty wonders that God performed, Israel gained no humility or gratitude. Therefore, He allowed them to hunger in the wilderness in order to give the rebellious another opportunity to humble their hearts.

God continues to humble the proud by allowing them to suffer hunger, sometimes in the natural realm and sometimes in the spiritual.

What is our attitude when God's Word is closed up to us? Do we say, "God, you said that man should live by every word that proceeds out of your mouth, but you are not feeding me. I'm going to perish and it will be your fault."

Hunger is humiliating, but it gives us an opportunity to get down low and recognize the goodness of our Father's

nature. When we have asked for Bread in the past He has never given us a stone, and His nature never changes. Beloved, in the face of hunger, humility begins to offer up gratitude for every crumb of truth that God has seen fit to give. Let us humble ourselves for God will not let us starve in the wilderness. His Word says, "And he brought us out from thence [Egypt], that he might bring us in, to give us the land that he swore unto our fathers" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

## **B. GOD HUMBLER WITH THE SAME DIET**

"...and fed thee with manna..." (Deuteronomy 8:3). By giving Israel the same menu day after day God humbled her again. He opened the windows of heaven and rained manna down upon them, but they said, "...there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numbers 21:5). The flesh soon grows weary of eating the same diet. Israel ate angel food and drank water out of the Rock, but her soul cried out for a change. We see this principle working in the natural realm. If, for example, limited finances cause us to live on hamburger meat for a week, the whole family starts dreaming of T-bone steaks. Is there something wrong with hamburger? It is not lacking in the vitamins and protein of meat. We just want something different to eat. This is also true spiritually. Each time we open God's Word we want to eat something new and exciting. We tend to pass lightly over old truths in our search for new revelation. If that revelation is slow in coming, the flesh reacts in the same way that Israel did. We start saying in our hearts, "This little truth is insufficient, I need meat out of the Word." However, if we humble our hearts, God will bless His Word to our spiritual bodies and cause it to sustain us all the way to spiritual Canaan's land.

After Israel reached natural Canaan's land, she found a place flowing with milk and honey, a land of corn and wine, a land of abundant fruit. But none of those who refused to accept God's humility Bread ever ate of His abundant supply. Let us come humbly before the Lord saying, "Give us this day our daily bread." Whatever He feeds will be sufficient for our needs.

### **C. GOD HUMBLER WITH AFFLICTIONS**

Many times people lay all the blame for affliction at Satan's doorstep, as it were, completely ignoring the fact that affliction is the third way God humbles the proud. The story of Job provides a classic example of Satan's limited powers to afflict. Each time Satan wished to afflict Job, he had to receive special permission from the Lord. The first time, God granted permission for Satan to touch Job's possessions but not his body. Later, God allowed him to afflict Job's body but commanded that he spare his life. Thus, Satan is nothing more than a tool in the Lord's hands.

The Lord used men to bring affliction upon King Manasseh. The enemy carried him away to the land of Babylon. In the land of captivity, Manasseh spent no time blaming the Devil or the men who had bound him.

And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers (II Chronicles 33:12).

Manasseh humbled himself and began to repent and to pray, "...and he [the Lord] was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he

was God" (II Chronicles 33:13). Affliction brought the desired humility and repentance; therefore, God delivered Manasseh from the humiliation of captivity.

Let us consider some of the Hebrew definitions of the word *affliction*, for these words give clues to the various forms that affliction takes.

*Affliction* means to cramp. When one is cramped in the natural, he finds it difficult or impossible to move in any direction. If unrelieved, cramps soon turn into excruciating pain. God humbles by allowing circumstances which cramp us, which seem to leave us with no way to turn. We may find it impossible to turn to the right or to the left, to go forward or to turn back, but beloved, we can always bow down. We can humble ourselves in just a little space.

*Affliction* means adversary, an enemy. It also means to besiege, to bind up, and to distress. When Israel turned from following after the Lord, she found that God became her adversary. The Holy One of Israel turned and fought against her until she repented of her idolatry. Some, however, never humble themselves even when their adversary is God Himself. Lucifer, for instance, would rather be a king in hell than to be a servant in heaven.

*Affliction* means to be narrower. We sometimes think that the Crucified Way is the narrow way, but it is nothing compared to the narrow strait that God puts us in to humble us.

*Affliction* means pangs; it means to be shut up, to be in a straight, to be troubled, to vex. This is how God afflicted Manasseh, He shut him up over in Babylon where he was troubled and vexed. He was distressed. God allowed him to suffer all these things in order to make him humble himself.

Someone has said, "God can't make us go on, but He can make us wish that we had." Knowing God's power to

humble, we should choose to humble ourselves before He has to send affliction into our lives.

#### **D. GOD HUMBLER WITH BEWAILING**

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envying, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, *my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already*, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed (II Corinthians 12: 19-21).

The Apostle Paul speaks of the fourth way that God humbles; He does it through the failures of others. When those for whom we are responsible, either spiritually or naturally, fail to fulfill our aspirations for them, it humbles us in a way that personal hunger, same diet, and personal affliction can never do. In each of the other cases we can humble ourselves if we choose to do so. We control our own will, but if another human being decides that he wants to rebel, we are powerless. We can do nothing except to fall upon our faces, bewailing for God to bring him to the place of repentance and humility.

Paul asked his spiritual children at Corinth to humble themselves and repent of their fleshly ways because he hoped to be spared the humiliating experience of publicly bewailing before the Lord in their behalf. The Greek mean-

ing of the word *bewail* is to grieve, to experience the painful feeling or the act of grief, feel passion, suffer sorrow, vex, mourn, bewail.

For the sins of others, the spiritual are brought in the spirit to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus suffered such agony that He sweat great drops of blood. Some say that Jesus prayed for the Father to spare Him from going to Calvary's cross, but this theory is contrary to God's Word. Jesus was actually dying there in the garden; His life was leaving Him because of the grief that His soul felt. Hebrews 5:6 says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, *and was heard in that he feared;*" The Father heard His Son praying that He would be spared from drinking the cup of death in the garden. Jesus wanted to live long enough to fulfill God's plan of redemption; He wanted to live until He could give His life on Calvary's cross as a sacrifice for fallen man. The Father not only heard, but He also sent angels to strengthen Jesus' mortal body.

Sin causes a tremendous grief to the Spirit of God, and those who live close to God feel that grief and sorrow. They are brought low as they bewail for the souls of sinners. Most of the time ministers, spiritual leaders, and spiritual parents do their bewailing and mourning in the privacy of their prayer closets, but occasionally God humbles them by putting the bewailing spirit upon them in public.

Jesus allows this to happen to give the spiritual ones an opportunity to bow down low and fellowship His suffering in the garden. While the disciples slept, Jesus agonized before the Lord. He surrendered to die rather than to lay aside the burden of lost souls. Sometimes we feel that those near to us should at least carry the burden for their own

spiritual needs. But God will let them fail; He will let them go to sleep, as it were, and leave us bearing the burden alone. Beloved, if Jesus had not humbled Himself in the garden when His disciples failed Him, we would be lost and without hope today.

Thank God for giving us burdens. They are good for us because they make us weep and wail before the Lord. If everything had been lovely in the Corinthian church when Paul came in he might have begun to take pride in his spiritual success. But the spiritual weaknesses of the people caused him to mourn and bewail their sins. When the disciples rejoiced because the devils were subject to them, Jesus said, "...rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). God humbles us with the failures of others so that we can learn to take pleasure in nothing besides Jesus Christ and His perfect will.

We now have seen the four ways that God humbles:  
A. With hunger; B. With the same diet; C. With afflictions, and D. With bewailing.

Failing to perceive the tremendous power that lies hidden in the low place, the carnal minded stumble over humiliation and thereby fail to attain the power for which their hearts yearn. Regardless of how humiliating a situation may seem, God has concealed a portion of power that can be ours if we humbly accept the low place. It is possible to be brought down low and yet miss the purpose that God allowed that particular situation to come into our lives. Beloved, the secret lies in willingly humbling our hearts before the Lord,

Let us consider the power that comes with humility.

## IV. POWER OF HUMILITY

Most men seek after power in a way that makes it impossible for them to lay hold of true and lasting power. By using God's gifts and abilities, mortal men are able to achieve various measures of power, but they are continually plagued with the thought that they will be displaced by another with greater abilities. Some men gain such high places in this world that they move other men as though they were pawns in a chess game. Impressive as their power seems, it is earth bound and therefore completely ineffectual in moving God.

Why sell out for a little temporal power when humility imparts power which touches the Living God!

### A. HUMILITY OPENS GOD'S EARS

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; *then will I hear from heaven*, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (II Chronicles 7:14).

None of man's proud words have power to attract God's attention, for He does not listen to the praise and honor that flesh bestows upon itself. The Lord appeared personally to King Solomon to reveal that the cry of humility is the sound that opens the ears of God. When His people begin to humble themselves before the Lord in prayer and fasting, confessing their sins, God hears from heaven. The members of the early church heard the same doctrine preached. In his first epistle, the Apostle John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is useless to come into God's presence claiming our worthiness, or

making excuses for our sins. Humility causes God to hear and minister to our needs.

## 1. Causes God to Minister Forgiveness and Healing

...and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land  
(II Chronicles 7:14).

Pride gains no audience with God, but humility causes God to minister forgiveness and healing to those who take the low place of a sinner.

Beloved, Christ Jesus came to save sinners, but Christians frequently are inclined to belittle their sins by calling them by other names such as nervousness, tiredness, or strain, for example. They say *my faults* and *my failures*, but never *MY SIN*. But God said, "If MY people, which are called by MY name, shall humble themselves...," thereby showing that Christians are not sinless. Furthermore, John, as a Christian preaching to Christians, said, "If WE confess OUR sins...."

Each day presents new opportunities for us to humble ourselves before the Lord and confess our sins and turn from our wicked ways. As we humble our hearts He will faithfully minister the Blood of forgiveness and heal our spiritual land. Spiritual fruitfulness can never grow in a heart that is corrupted by sins of the flesh.

If forgiveness and healing were all that humility wrought, it would more than pay us to humble our hearts. But the humble place is also the place of love. Each time that we experience a new portion of the Blood of forgiveness, our capacity of love toward God increases. In regard to the sinner woman who anointed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but

to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). It is no wonder, then, that the Apostle Paul declared himself to be the chief of sinners.

The cry of humility from sinners has power to open God's ears.

## **2. Causes God to Bring Deliverance**

Nothing is so powerful as humility. When God hears the cry of humility He brings deliverance.

And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God (II Chronicles 33:12,13).

When God humbled Manasseh by allowing him to suffer affliction at the hands of his enemies, Manasseh's cries of humility ascended into God's ears, causing the Lord to deliver him from the land of captivity. Deliverance from an unpleasant situation does not come through rebellion. In fact rebellion actually worsens the problem because it amounts to open accusation against God's nature of mercy. However, when we humble ourselves by acknowledging God's mercy in judgment, it causes God to move in our behalf.

In Job 22:29 we read where God promises to save the humble. "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person." The cries of humility rise from the lowest place and cause God to lift us from our down cast position.

When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble (Psalm 9:12).

Humility has power to deliver from wrath even when God comes as the avenger of blood to pour out judgment. He is not forgetful of those who humble themselves before Him; He will deliver them.

Arise, O LORD: O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble...Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: (Psalm 10:12-17).

Consider, for a moment, the power of humility. Humility's voice is so strong that God hears it while it is still in the invisible, while it is still in the form of a desire. Before the mouth speaks the humility that the heart feels, God hears it. Human beings may speak against us and devils may plot our downfall; our flesh may scream against humiliation, but beloved, God hears the voice of humility above every other voice. Surely no power can make itself heard like the voice of humility.

## **B. HUMILITY CAUSES GOD'S MOUTH TO SPEAK**

Humility has power to cause God to speak as well as to cause God's ears to hear.

### **1. Causes God's Mouth to Stay Judgment**

The power of humility can cause God to change a verdict which has already gone forth out of His mouth. We realize what a great feat is accomplished by humility after

we understand that mortal man considers his own words of judgment irrevocable.

King Darius, for example, had written and signed a decree which had been drawn up by men who were jealous of Daniel's position of authority. It was a bad law, one rooted in jealousy and crowned with pride. It commanded that no man could petition any god or man besides King Darius for thirty days. The first to be accused of transgressing this ridiculous law was Daniel, the most valuable man in the king's kingdom. Quickly Daniel's accusers reminded the king of his irreclaimable word.

...Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king established may be changed (Daniel 6:15).

Neither the king's friendship with Daniel nor his personal need for Daniel's services caused him to humble himself and change the word that had gone out of his mouth. Rather than lose face before a few jealous men, King Darius commanded that Daniel be thrown into the lion's den. Apart from God's miracle working power, Daniel would have furnished the lions with their evening meal.

Though nothing moved King Darius, humility has power to move God to reverse the Word of judgment which has already been spoken against sin. Let us look at some examples of this kind of power.

#### **a. Ahab**

During his life, King Ahab wrought such wickedness that God sent Elijah to prophesy his untimely end and that of his entire household. The Bible says, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wicked-

ness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" (I Kings 21:27). Thus, God's judgment against Ahab was fair. The king had no foundation of righteousness upon which to base an appeal for clemency. Nevertheless, when this wicked man heard God's decree of judgment, he began to practice humility.

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly (I Kings 21:27).

Ahab rent his kingly mantle as a demonstration that he was stripping himself of all the power and authority that his earthly position represented. By so doing, he acknowledged God's position of power and authority. Then Ahab changed into a garment of sackcloth which imposed added suffering and humiliation. Sackcloth was of a course texture; it was dark in color and frequently made of goat's hair. Mourners clothed themselves in sackcloth to symbolize the inner grief and anguish that they felt.

Ahab granted the flesh no pleasure day or night, for he slept in the sackcloth, and he also afflicted himself through fasting. Moreover, he changed his walk; he began to walk softly.

The wicked Ahab humbled himself so greatly that it caused God to speak again to Elijah, saying, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? *because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house*" (I Kings 21:29). Humility is powerful; it stayed the hand of judgment from falling upon Ahab.

Immediately the carnal mind rises up to ask why God would save Ahab and then wipe out his son. This is not injustice on God's part, but rather it is further proof of the power of humility. When God justly judged Ahab for his sin, the king humbled himself before the Lord. However, the Bible never records where his son ever humbled himself or repented of his evil ways. After the Word of judgment went forth, he continued in the wickedness that carried with it the judgment of death. Humility had power to save the son from death just as it had saved his father, but by refusing to humble himself, he left God with no alternative but to carry out His Word of judgment.

## **b. Josiah**

Josiah's father, Arnon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, both had been very wicked kings who had led their people to walk in sin and idolatry. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign, but he was a good king who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. The Bible says that he walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

During the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, Hilkiyah, the high priest, found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. When the king heard the words of the book he realized that the people were guilty of sins which called the wrath of God down upon them. Although he personally walked uprightly before the Lord, Josiah humbled himself before the Lord. Moreover, he sent men to inquire of the prophetess Huldah concerning the judgment prophesied against the people. Speaking through the lips of the prophetess, the Lord said:

...Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; *Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD*, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. Behold therefore I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place...(II Kings 22:16-20).

Again, God stayed the pronounced judgment against Israel and granted peace during Josiah's lifetime because he humbled himself.

Israel knew peace, not because she had repented of her wickedness, but because her king humbled himself before the Lord when he had no reason to think that the judgment would touch him personally. Josiah's humility did not change the hearts of the people, but it spared him the pain of watching them suffer for their sins.

### **c. Hezekiah**

In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD; and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah (II Chronicles 32:24-26).

God's spoken Word meant little to the king; he required a sign from the Lord before he would believe that God would heal him and add fifteen years to his life (II Kings 20:1-11). God humbled the sun for Hezekiah by causing it to go back ten degrees. In spite of the great miracle that God performed, Hezekiah failed to humble his own heart and render to God the praise and worship that were due His Name.

Although God held Hezekiah's very life in His hands, the king demonstrated no fear of the Lord. To the contrary, pride filled his heart, causing him to show all the secret treasures of the kingdom to the ambassadors from Babylon. These actions brought the wrath of God upon the king and upon all of his subjects. When they humbled themselves before the Lord, however, God stayed the Word of judgment.

Ahab's humility caused God to stay judgment for him personally. Josiah, the king, humbled himself for the sins of his people, and God stayed the judgment. Whereas the people joined King Hezekiah in humbling themselves for

the sins of their leader. Each of us face similar situations in our lives. Sometimes we must humble ourselves because of our own wickedness if we hope to receive mercy from the Lord. At other times we have an opportunity to humble our hearts for those of lesser spiritual growth who will not humble themselves. Occasionally the Lord will put us in the position to humble our hearts because our leaders, either spiritually or naturally, have offended the Lord. In every case, it is the power of humility that causes the mouth of God to speak words of mercy to those who are worthy of His judgment.

## **2. Causes God's Mouth to Speak Deliverance**

Humility is powerful enough to open God's mouth and cause Him to speak words of deliverance. During the days of King Rehoboam, the people followed their king in forsaking the Lord, therefore, God spoke saying that He had left them in the hands of the wicked king of Egypt.

Whereupon the princes of Israel, and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore, I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak (II Chronicles 12:6,7).

Humility moved God to speak deliverance from the destruction which the Egyptian king had originally planned against Israel. Although they suffered the loss of some of their treasures, God spared their lives because they humbled their hearts by accepting their punishment and

acknowledging that God was just in judging their transgressions.

As Christians we sometimes feel that we are about to be destroyed by the enemy of our souls, but if we know the secret of humbling our hearts before the Lord, we will soon hear Him speak the Word that delivers us from our enemy.

### **C. HUMILITY OPENS GOD'S TREASURE HOUSE**

We may own all of this world's goods and still be poverty stricken in our souls. Those rich in pride can never unlock the door to God's treasure house of priceless treasures; these are reserved for the humble.

God feeds those who are willing to lay as babes upon the great breast of His Word. When Christians humble their hearts and minds before the Lord, He opens the door, as it were, and unfolds the great mysteries that are hidden from the wise and prudent. The power of humility not only unlocks the door to God's storehouse of wisdom, but it also allows us to possess and use these special treasures.

#### **1. Joy or Gladness**

The joy that one feels in the high seat of self-exaltation is tainted with the fear of losing that position. This fear serves as the breeding ground for much of the jealousy and strife that we see in religious circles, not to mention the carnal world.

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad (Psalm 34:2).

The flesh seems to be constantly on the alert lest any praise or attention should be diverted from itself to another, but humility gives us power to be glad when another is receiving exaltation.

In so many words King David said, "I'll boast on the Lord; I'll exalt Him rather than brag on the accomplishments of the flesh." Whether we like to admit it or not the flesh resents even the words that others pour out to the Lord. For example, when we minister the Word of God our fleshly ears are wide open to hear someone say, "My, that was a beautiful sermon that YOU preached." But how does the flesh feel when the people say, "God really blessed my soul with His Word this morning. Oh praise the Lord for His goodness." Only the humble have power to rejoice and be glad because the Lord is being lifted up on high.

Beloved, when we recognize our proud flesh we can instantly begin to humble our hearts and acknowledge the truth. God alone is worthy of praise; He deserves to be exalted and worshipped. On the other hand, we deserve hell, and it is His mercy and grace which allow us to be called by His Name. After humility toward the Lord floods our soul, it is easy then to be glad and rejoice when any part of the body of Christ is being lifted up.

The joy of the humble has power to bring pleasure to God's heart.

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God (Psalm 69:30-32).

No sacrifice that His people give to Him pleases the Lord like their praises. The humble praise Him personally, and they also have power to rejoice every time another heart praises God. Thus, God receives a double portion of praise from the humble.

## **2. Deliverance**

We have already seen how humility causes God to speak the Word that brings deliverance. Humility also has power to teach us how to deliver ourselves from the snare that we fall into because of pride.

My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, then art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, and make sure thy friend (Proverbs 6:1-5).

King Solomon dealt with the problem of becoming surety for the obligation of another. The flesh abhors to admit poverty in any measure; therefore, we sometimes find that we have agreed to do something that would be impossible for us to fulfill should the need arise. The wise man taught his son that humility has power to deliver us from the unwise debts that the pride of our flesh causes us to assume.

If someone asks us to co-sign a note for them, for example, it is very easy for the flesh to say, "Sure brother, I'll be glad to do that for you." But what do we do when we realize later that we have spoken unadvisedly? Our own obligations make it impossible for us to make payments on such a note. We cannot force our brother to release us from

the bond of our own words, but humility has power to deliver us. If we come humbly, tearfully and begin to acknowledge our poverty and inability to assume any added debt, that humility will touch the heart of our brother and cause him to release us.

We may never face the problem of being surety for another, but we have all been ensnared by the words of our own mouths in one way or another. Humility is our only hope of being delivered from the pride that puts us in such positions.

### **3. Exaltation**

Humility has power to rejoice in the low place and power to deliver from pride; it also has power to bring exaltation.

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased;  
and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted  
(Matthew 23:12).

Those who exalt themselves to positions of power and honor soon take that power and use it unmercifully. The scribes and the Pharisees, for instance, used God's Word to exalt themselves to the place of lawgiver, yet they never let that law touch their own proud hearts. They forced others to walk in strict obedience to laws that they followed in form only. Beloved, before we can be trusted to rule over the flesh of others, we must humble our hearts and let God's Word rule over the fleshly attitudes and dispositions of our own hearts.

Next to Jesus Christ Himself, the Bride will hold the position of highest honor and greatest authority in all eternity, yet in the Book of Revelation we see the posture

that she assumes before the Lord. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:3,4). These servants can be none other than the Bride herself, for she alone is promised to wear His Name (Revelation 3:12). Although the Bride shares the throne with God and the Lamb (Revelation 3:21) throughout eternity, she has the privilege and joy of being His personal servant.

In this life and in eternity God's rule for spiritual promotion is based on humility. The gospel of Luke verifies this principle.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:14).

Humility has power to lift the publican from the low place of a sinner into the experience of justification through the power of the Blood of redemption. James says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). Praise God for humility; it has power to take hold of the mighty hand of God.

#### 4. Grace

...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:20,21).

The word *grace* comes from a word meaning gratitude. Beloved, Jesus did not redeem fallen man grudgingly, but He did it with grace, with gratitude that He had something to offer for our sins.

When we give our hearts to Jesus Christ, He imparts some of His grace to us. It is this grace that enables us to start out on our spiritual journey, walking with Him. Very soon, however, we find that we have need of more grace if we hope to stay in the race. How do we lay hold of this grace and how do we use it after receiving it? Since every need that we have is supplied through the Word of God, we can expect to find the answers in the Bible.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?...Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts...Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but *giveth grace unto the humble* (James 4:1-6).

Our spiritual man has a desire to serve the Lord and walk in His footsteps of self-denial, whereas our carnal heart lusts to indulge in sinful pleasures. Man can exercise self-control up to a point, but always pride enters in and man takes the glory for his temperance. However, when we humble our hearts and confess that we are powerless to achieve the goal for which our spiritual man longs, then God will give us His spirit of grace that can deny the appetites and desires of the flesh and be glad about it. In this case God gets the praise, for we realize our helplessness apart from His grace.

Humbling ourselves before the Lord is one thing, but we usually need an extra portion of grace to be in subjection to the authority of others.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (I Peter 5:5).

Beloved, Jesus Christ has a mind to humble Himself in every situation, and He is able to clothe our minds with that same humility. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

Although He was the Creator of the world, He humbled Himself and obeyed his mortal parents; He was in subjection to the laws of the land. At His death He was in subjection to those who persecuted Him and crucified Him. Who are we, then, to resist coming under the authority of those that God sets over us? Humility has power to lay hold of grace that will take up into new depths of the Lord's surrender and obedience.

Only the power of humility can open God's treasure house. These treasures include: 1. Joy, 2. Deliverance, 3. Exaltation, and 4. Grace.

Gazing upon such priceless treasures, the heart cries out, "Surely, Lord, this is more than mortal man deserves." Yet humility has still another power.

## **D. HUMILITY HAS POWER TO DWELL WHERE GOD DWELLS**

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15).

Every heart desires to dwell where God dwells. The beautiful cherub called Lucifer was cast out of heaven because he set out to achieve this goal without humbling himself. Pride has no hope of dwelling in the presence of God, for that privilege goes to the humble. The high and holy God who inhabits eternity also dwells with those of a contrite and humble spirit. Nothing in time or eternity compares with the blessing of being in the personal presence of God Himself.

Through humiliation and death the man Jesus gained an eternal union with God. On the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter declared, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Never again will Jesus have to be separated from the Lord's presence. If we marry our hearts to the humility of Jesus Christ in this life, we can share His dwelling place in eternity. Praise God for humility,

God loves man and desires to have unbroken fellowship with him. In order to help man make the decision that will assure him an eternal relationship with the Lord, God spent many years warning man of the consequences of failing to humble, teaching him how to humble, showing him how God humbles, and unveiling the power of humility.

Beloved, humility is unavoidable. Each man must personally decide the question-*When shall I humble myself?*

God grant us wisdom to choose to walk in humility in this life so that we may know the eternal pleasure of God's personal presence.

THE END