

Thoughts, Acknowledgements and Conclusions Of a Man Seeking God

Just for clarification as I get started. The following terms may be used a few times throughout this work and I would like a clear understanding of them presented to avoid misinterpretation of the statements containing them.

Trust / Reliance - To place confidence in somebody or in somebody's good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.

Faith - Belief in and devotion to God.

Biblical definition of faith: *Hebrews 11:1,3, 6 - Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Belief - Acceptance by the mind that something is true or real, often supported by an emotional or spiritual sense of certainty.

Confidence - Belief or trust in somebody or something, or in the ability of somebody or something to act in a proper, trustworthy, or reliable manner.

Assurance / Conviction - Freedom from uncertainty - Firmness of belief or opinion

Providential – preordained, destined, divine, heaven-sent. Decreed by divine providence.

Sovereign – supreme, dominant, superior, matchless. Being above all others in character, importance, and excellence.

Perseverance – determination, resolution, dedication, diligence, persistence and tenacity to be unyielding in following a course of action.

Endurance - the ability or strength to continue or last, especially despite fatigue, stress, or other adverse conditions such as bearing pain or hardships.

Justice and mercy meet on the cross. God is a Re-Creator of men's lives and has promised to restore to us, many times over in the life to come, the things of this world we feel we have lost or given up for His sake.

Oh, to have known this following information and understood its power at a young age and embraced it! To have had a life of God's leading, wisdom to have made Godly decisions that would have graced my life instead of causing so much heartache not just for myself but for all others involved. And oh, what could have been! Yet, because of God's grace and mercy, I have endured and persevered and grown in His ways, in spite of myself, to be in a place in my life spiritually that I would not trade for anything. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28

"They" say repetition leads to understanding. What at first may be strange, after repeated exposure becomes clear and understandable. Many of these comments may be similar or variations of the same

thought. However, they were the resultant answers to many questions asked in the Men's Bible studies of numerous books of the Bible over many years. The Bible speaks to everyone differently but the foundational messages should be the same to every Christian.

“Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for Israel. Whenever you receive a message from Me, warn people immediately. If I warn the wicked, saying, ‘You are under the penalty of death,’ but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible for their deaths. If you warn them and they refuse to repent and keep on sinning, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved yourself because you obeyed Me. Ezekiel 3:17-19

These thoughts, acknowledgements and conclusions will jump between general statements, to personalized thoughts, and Scripture that appeared relevant at the time.

Let me present this Scripture penned by the apostle Paul in prefacing the following comments in this paper. *“So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Romans 7:14-23*

To hear Paul (considered by most to have been the strongest Christian) make the above statements should give all Christians some consolation in the mist of our lifelong struggle between our flesh and God's Holy Spirit dwelling within us. We all know what we should do, including me. As the saying goes: Easier said than done. Having had these thoughts while studying, I find for me, it is a good guide to review, and knowing I have them here in one place consolidated down from many thoughts into a productive guide to maintain a positive frame of mind, will be beneficial, a realistic reminder that 'it is because of God I am who I am. And it is because of me I'm not who I should be.' We are more often than not our own worst enemy.

Call to Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things that you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3

We need to continually be reminded *who* God is! Our Savior, Creator, Provider and Protector. He is the Almighty, *who is able*. Providential and Sovereign.

Why has God provided a way for us to become men/women we should be? So He can display His glory through us. He will lead us to the place He wants us to be and will arrange all circumstances to fall into place to accomplish His will.

FEAR – Face Everything And Recover – or – Fear Everything And Run

Are you *Fixing your Eyes on an Altered Reality*? Fear is caused by things that 1) are not true 2) are distorted reality 3) the unknown future. The future has always been unknown to all men!

All men have endured, persevered and lived life as it comes our way. The majority have survived and even thrived – especially the men of God. The Word of God brings hope and encouragement to man's existence, especially the expectation of an eternal future in heaven with God, which should make us realize nothing we encounter in this life can compare to what lies ahead for the Christian. Those who reject God, bring upon themselves God's wrath. Those who embrace the philosophy of I'm OK – your OK – need to know that 'truth' comes from 'the Book of Illusions.'

My grace is sufficient. 2 Corinthians 12:9 – God's love and grace for His own is what gives us the strength for enduring what life brings our way. Life's continual difficulties and trials need continual wisdom and encouragement from God's Word.

Though God has and can use miracles to assist us, He expects us to use the tools He has given us to overcome our obstacles.

God proportions our trials to our strength and our strength to our trials. How many of us and how many times, have said 'Lord I don't think I'm strong enough to handle this.' However, He has said He would never give us more than we can handle. God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of His people by affliction and temptation for the latter end of their days. Meaning as we grow in Him, we gain strength to overcome more intense trials. Satisfaction comes when we continue in God's plan for us according to His will which the Bibles emphasizes is always better than where we would end up going our own way.

I should spend the time needed with God (to develop the intimate relationship we both desire) in order to be open to hearing Him as He guides, even while enduring rough circumstances. We should not hurry to act without seeking God's guidance first. We should be open to input and counsel from those we know seek and trust God. We should seek to recognize God's work in our lives and circumstances. Has there not been a time when something favorable developed in the circumstances of your life that could never have been expected by the understood 'natural order of things?' The usual problem is that we don't see those circumstances for what they are; God watching over you and working in your life.

No matter how busy we are we should stop and acknowledge God's grace and mercy in our lives. When we recognize it and decide to thank Him 'later,' that's when our nature to forget will kick in and it is an opportunity lost that God wanted us to see, appreciate and acknowledge.

I need to consciously thank God for my blessings when I see them, all of them, no matter how small or how large.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it carries along with it the power of God to accomplish the salvation He provided for all who believe.

What God has done for others, He will do for you. With arms wide open, He will pardon you.

God has made Himself known by His creation and by placing His laws in the heart of man. By his conscience man knows when he has sinned and confession is an acknowledgement of that sin.

Truth inherently cannot be destroyed, diminished or altered. Those who oppose the truth in unrighteousness can only attempt to hold it down, cover it up or suppress it.

We need to examine ourselves before trying to correct others. We are not to judge others in a disdainful manner in which the purpose is to show them they are wrong or at fault.

Man is led to repentance by the goodness of God when he actually realizes what he is offered and how patiently God has been waiting for him to come to his senses and accept Jesus as Savior and the gift of eternal life.

God alone knows the heart of a man. We have no knowledge or understanding of a man's heart or his motives. But God has the knowledge and authority to judge righteously.

God uses righteous judgment in our lives by allowing us to go through trials which, after having gone through them we still trust the Lord (not with a 'why me' attitude). Our faith has been purified and shown to be genuine through endurance and perseverance.

By our lifestyle we are to be a light, not hidden but placed in a place to give light to others. Our lives should be as a light that shows the saving power of God (especially to those who knew us 'before') which will look appealing to those in darkness who are sincerely looking for a way out. We should not live in such a manner that we misrepresent God and show no reason for someone to change the way they are living apart from God or at least to wonder 'if there is a better way.'

Without the transformed heart and motives from God, outward 'Good Deeds' are of no eternal value.

Knowing how constant our failures are in following through on our 'good intentions' we know we cannot always do the right thing even when we know it is the right thing and doing otherwise will probably lead us into a situation that we will, more likely than not – regret. That's why God's promise of the Holy Spirit 'in us' to guide and lead us, give us wisdom to utilize our knowledge of His ways is always an advantage compared to the alternative.

In the life of one not knowing God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, when calamity comes into their life they may see it as God's judgment against them or His indifference towards them which may drive them further away. Can we enlighten them to the truth of the matter?

What a man says and how he acts merely shows what is in the depth of his heart.

From Proverbs: Some speak with mean, cutting remarks while the tongue of a wise man brings healing. Only the wise give good advice, the fool cannot do so. The man who keeps silent or guards the words he speaks will stay out of trouble. Mark a straight path (of truth) for your feet. Stick to the path and you will stay safe. When we give God our heart, He will allow us to see the wisdom of His ways.

By God's abundant grace towards man i.e. providing the means of reconciliation (Christ's sacrificial death), and giving man the opportunity to accept (to be justified), or reject (subject to God's wrath) by believing the truth God has provided, man has a decision to make. Does any other explanation of life and death or what lies ahead after death give you something else you would rather look forward to than eternity in heaven? If so – good luck!

You can't ask for forgiveness when you are 6' under. You cannot give excuses or plead your case. You only have one life to get it right. Better pay attention – you're running out of time.

Man is called blessed by God when God does not count his sin against him – after having accepted Christ as Savior.

God leaves none of His children behind.

Before I acknowledged God as Savior, I had no deep thoughts of God – only calling on Him in times of trouble (not knowing but only hoping He would help). After accepting, looking back I thank Him for protecting me through all the stupid, dangerous things I did, protecting me throughout my life until, and since, I came to Him for salvation.

The ‘Ten Commandments’ or the ‘The Law’ is the Divine standard. Not until we know the standard do we realize how we are inclined to rebel against that standard. The apostle Paul realized that all he had expected from obeying the law was non-existent. (2 Cor.3:9) says “*The Lord is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” The Lord is longsuffering, but do not think because He has not punished you immediately for some of the things you have said or done, that it meant that they were not that bad or that He condones those words and actions. Knowing the Ten Commandments and agreeing they are good goals to strive for is one thing, however, if we try to keep them to make us “right” with God, that only shows our ignorance and disregard for what God was saying their purpose was and making the death of Christ on the cross of no avail. When the Ten Commandments (The Law) were given, it was never expected that man would be able to keep them in order to become righteous but to make man see that it was impossible to keep the commandments and needed a Savior.

The apostle Paul states, “*Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, “You must not covet.” But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.* Romans 7:7-12

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. Romans 7:24-25

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9

Man is born of the flesh and remains in the flesh unable to enter the kingdom of God until he is born of the Spirit, that is, ‘Born Again.’

The fruit of the Spirit of God is love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, along with righteousness and truth. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 4:8

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

The spiritually minded revere God, desire to live a righteous life and to pass on the truth received from God to others and turn many from their life of sin. The apostle Paul heard this message from Jesus. “*Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness*

of what you have seen and will see of Me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are set apart by faith in Me.’ Acts 26:15-18

Only Christians have the Spirit of God living within them. Christians are not controlled (dominated) by their sinful nature. Our bodies will die but our spirit is alive because we have been made right with God. As God raised Christ from the dead He will raise us from the death of this earthly body to eternal life in heaven

So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Romans 8:6-11

Lord, help me to wait on hearing instructions from You instead of moving forward in haste. May I recognize the different ways and people You may use to guide me. (In my spirit I hear God say – Always ask for wisdom when you know that is what is needed to make the correct decision – regardless of how unimportant you feel the matter is. I have paved the way ahead. Take advantage and do not be influenced by the past that did not turn out as you hoped. Let the past go! Commit to walk forward with Me and all will turn out for the best).

God’s way is always best even it defies logic. He has a reason for all He asks us to do. When we don’t recognize His lead and go our own way we will pay the price. It is not always some catastrophic, disastrous, terrible misfortune, we merely miss out on His best for us. Seek patience, haste will usually lead to regret.

Lord, may I, through Your Word, continually grasp these never ending lessons You bring to mind and be more proficient in putting them into practice. (In my spirit I hear God say – Remember I AM with you always – Ready, willing and able to lead, protect and provide – Trust Me).

Spiritual warfare is intense! It makes life a hard walk but when walked with God the results are worthwhile and satisfying. Adversity brings strength. We do not overcome our trials and spiritual warfare overnight. A carefree life may just mean you are no threat to Satan’s game plan. When a God-consciousness is not part of your daily thoughts, with no thought or desire to follow God’s Spirit’s leading of His will for your life, Satan will just move on to his next threat. He will never run out of threats just as he will never run out those who present no problem.

Lord, keep my mind and life’s trials in perspective as seen through the Mind of Christ. (In my spirit I hear God say – Having received the right perspective and desiring to see all as from the Mind of Christ, shows you have been given what you need to overcome. Trust I AM in control and always with you).

God says “Come just as you are.” He made us. He knows us. He knows who we are and what we are. He knows how we feel about ourselves (whether proud, arrogant or humble). He knows what others think of us. What is more important is what He wants you to know, about Him. That He loves you and your soul is so important that He sent His Son Jesus to die for you on the cross and resurrected Him to show He was no ordinary man but God. All that so He could provide a way for you (a sinful man) to live eternally with Him in heaven, as opposed to eternally (that’s a long, long time) separated from Him in Hell. Just because you may not believe that fact, are you willing to let your stubborn pride determine your destiny?

New successes and victories should not overshadow the successes of the past that led the way.

Just as God brought us through many past trials victoriously, we increase in spiritual strength and confidence along the way which reduces much of the anxiousness of what the future will bring.

God has a plan for our lives. He knows we are flawed but He knows our heart and when we trust and obey, He will work His plan in our life despite our flawed walk.

Mountaintops and valleys in our lives all produce the right perspective if we trust and have faith in Him. Don’t give up. God hasn’t given up on you!

We are positionally perfect in Christ, yet practically sinful in this body of the natural man.

There is much more needed in our lives to become what God wants us to be. No matter how long we have been a Christian, we know there is so much more to learn, to incorporate into our lives, regardless of what we have already accomplished.

We don’t deny sin’s hindrance but we don’t accept failure. We may fall but the Lord lifts us back up and brings us through that time victoriously. Hopefully we recognize the victory, even if it is long after the fact.

A person needs to acknowledge when, as he has aged, he cannot continue on at the same pace as he did in his youth. When God has a plan it will be accomplished using us while we are able and continue with others until the job is done. All people but especially older people should set themselves to do quickly which must be done before they die – lest death prevent them. *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave where you are going.” Eccl. 9:10*

Wisdom is trusting in God to make the right choice for the path you walk. He who follows God’s divine will, will receive God’s divine favor.

I choose to continue this walk God has laid out for me, hoping (yet believing) it is and will be a positive walk (and a path to follow) for my family and others I may encounter who recognize the truth of these words and the examples of those, who in their lives, who have surrendered the guidance of their lives to the One who is the reason for all we have ever known and loved. Lord may we always appreciate the magnitude of the wondrous effect you have made in our lives.

We acknowledge we have to fight the good fight of faith. We know our enemies; the world, our flesh and the devil. In reality, probably most times it’s ‘Me, Myself and I.’ The devil gives us enough rope, (letting our minds run wild trying to rationalize things), to hang ourselves without him giving much effort to bring us to our end. It is so hard to keep our focus on Him, especially during those times when we are leaning toward the wrong direction.

Land of wandering – When we are out of the presence of the God (God’s guidance) we will find ourselves wandering and purposeless. The solution is to ‘Surrender.’ Why not avoid the pain and emptiness that *will* come, while gaining no satisfaction, and seek the contentment God provides when you know He is with you – and you are with Him.

When the decision to accept the Gospel becomes the paramount decision in your life, we all think about cleaning our lives up first. Not necessary or possible. When we surrender, God transforms hearts, and in turn, thoughts, attitudes, actions, usually over a maturing process of time. We do have a part in the process. We must do what must be done to destroy and put behind us those sinful traits that have defined us in the past (not necessarily to others but as we know ourselves). That is what brings us to where we really want to be, in better communication and a right relationship with God. The road is rough (but oh, so worth it!). But the perseverance and endurance derived, will display your genuine saving faith.

Things happen. - Unexpected, unwelcomed and ill-timed situations *will* happen. Be ready, accept it, face it and move on while seeking how God would have you respond in the proper manner. God challenges us to step out of comfort zones by our circumstances, not necessarily a trial but to step out in faith believing a certain action is one that is, in God’s eyes, is beneficial to you and/or others.

When Satanic influences come (and they will) draw your strength to persevere and endure from the Word and the promises given to us to know God is with you and working in your life. Satan’s efforts increase when he knows you see God’s work in your life and will do his best to bring doubt and stop you from seeing God’s Promised Land in your life. Everyday issues are the fire that refines you. Don’t let disbelief in God’s promises and ability to accomplish His work in your life sabotage His future for you.

As we go through the trials and obligations of life we should recognize the blessings of the Lord and remember the blessings come from our love of God, our devotion to Him and desire to live the lives He has laid out before us. Because we made the conscious decision to follow Him, He allows us to recognize and take advantage of the grace He has bestowed upon us.

When we see work that Glorifies God, it is good, when the opportunity is there, to acknowledge the faithful work of His servants who faithfully persevered to completion.

We should give the benefit of the doubt when honest zeal is sometimes engaged in, without proper discretion, and overlook other’s weaknesses as God overlooks ours.

Many of us make excuses to justify our actions. We try to fix the problems that may come in the future without realizing the problems at hand. That may be distractions of the enemy disrupting our focus from that which needs attention now. Best laid plans are never a sure thing because the future is unknown to us and is, for all intents and purposes, ‘out of our control.’ Trials and the unknown future should be placed in God by our trust in His control. Prayer, for guidance daily, should be our goal.

When distance comes between you and Jesus it is because you left. He is waiting for you to return. He has not gone anywhere. Life can distract and pull us away from prayer. Prayer is that intimate connection given to us that we should take advantage of.

In the past God placed Priests and Elders, and today pastors, teachers, evangelists and many other individuals in positions to teach His Word – So that His people would know that God has always been faithful to His own, so they, in turn would remain faithful to Him. It is the duty of the elders in the

community to pass on God's Word to the upcoming generation. As we get older we realize we must be more focused on passing on His Word while we have the opportunity.

We should serve the Lord according to our knowledge, capability and opportunities.

Do not let your opinion of the Bible be based on people who claim to follow its teaching but appear to be hypocrites or those who attempt to teach its truth in manners that do not seem proper or sincere. *Especially many who are on Christian television. Many (not all) television pastors probably drive more people away from God than are drawn to Him or lead them down the wrong path* (promise of prosperity and ignoring man's propensity and tendency to sin). When those who are in positions to represent God, do not do so properly, or do so in a distinctly improper manner, they do great harm to the faith of those they are to lead. Some may be obnoxious, some overly zealous, but Judge God's word by reading it (or listening to it) personally. *Be discerning*, for every bad example there are many more good examples. Stay away from those who *pressure* you for your financial support. (2 Peter 2:3) There are times when the enemy brings corruption into the church. Newer Christians may see it for what it is and realizing that is not right, yet seeing it in the church, the place that should display truth, will walk away saying "If that's what the church is about, I don't need it."

An intelligent person who is seeking truth would certainly read and consider a book that has the qualifications of the Bible. The science of archaeology has in the last 100 years confirmed in startling detail what scholars of the Bible have always believed, that it is an enormously reliable book, completely trustworthy and remarkably relevant. There are no proven historical or scientific errors in the Bible. Over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament regarding the birth, life and death of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. If they foretold the future, and all came to pass as stated, should we not believe the many other prophecies about the future and the "last days" before Jesus Christ returns, shall also come to pass?

Remember the promises of God to you! Who you are 'in Christ,' having the 'Mind of Christ.' Look back - remember where He brought you from. Look back from where you were - to who you have become. Is there not satisfaction and gratification in being a man/woman of integrity, of living a life of respectability, stumbling often yet mainly in our own eyes and under the watch of God - yet always lifted up, putting the past behind us and moving forward on the road God has ordained. When God has ordained the path He clears the way. By His providential, sovereign power, He provides the strength, wisdom and favor needed to attain the ultimate goal.

Keep your word. Help others when it is in your power to do so. Do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.

Even when problems multiply and seem to come from every direction, they are not stronger than your God who is able to conquer your adversaries (problems/trials etc.).

Attempt to acknowledge and appreciate when God *has* and *is* working in your life to overcome that which Satan attempts to use to make you stumble.

As God led His men in the Bible, I need to keep in perspective the lessons learned from their stories in order to keep my faith in the Lord's leading of my life. Knowing He leads me and knows the way, gives me the courage to move forward. The more I stay in the Word, the more I know Him and trust Him for I know He cares for me.

Lord you know me and know what I need. I pray for the Spirit's guidance to keep me on the path I need to walk and keep me in the Word which will keep that path clear before me. (In my spirit I hear God say – You have walked with Me long enough to know that you have all you need to have success in accomplishing My will. Be steadfast, move forward and trust Me).

When God gives us a vision and guides us, we are to prepare ourselves along the way - looking for the doors He has opened. We should stay on the path not being sidetracked by the distractions of this world for which we will pay a heavy price.

I detest my weak will in denying my fleshly desires in order to bring me to the place I want to be – in a deeper relationship with You. Help me to utilize the strength You have instilled in me. (In my spirit I hear God say – You know I offer the best and you know how to get it. You know the letdown that follows going your own way. You have the knowledge and the power to follow after that which you claim you know is right).

The *In-Between Place* - The past behind us and the plan for our life still ahead. How do we get from here to there? Walk circumspectly and be diligent. For when you're ready to move forward on God's path, the enemy confronts you to intimidate and bring insecurity. Be diligent on the path to the plan. The enemy attacks and may slow you down but he will never prevail. Be diligent – Do not strive – The work you are called to do is “the work of God.”

God commends faith - no matter how small. We can never know the impact we may have simply by maintaining our faith, trust and integrity.

Lord, help make my path clear as a lamp to my feet. Strengthen my faith and trust. (In my spirit I hear God say – Stay in My Word, seek Me in all things. Nothing is too small to bring to the Lord).

Do not get so close to God's work that you see too much of yourself in His work. When we insist on leading the way, we know by experience, we usually mess it up.

Do not use God and perceive His power as a 'lucky charm.' God demands reverence and will not be taken for granted. (see *1st Samuel chap. 4.*)

We need to accept that God not only leads the way but protects His own along the path He guides.

I need to remember God has promised to always be with me and though I do not know what lies ahead, I know that He has prepared the way in which He leads me. The more we set aside our lives for the Lord and conform to His will the easier it is for Him to use us.

Thank You Lord for giving me the wisdom to know You are in control of my life and allowing me to move forward without worry as to what the future holds. I need to move forward through my life's unknown and sometimes perilous looking future knowing You are guiding me by Your Spirit and I will continue to place my faith and trust in You for Your protection until my last day has come. (In my spirit I hear God say – Your faith, trust and acknowledgement of My working in your life are only part of the blessings of being one of Mine. Be open to My Spirit's work in your life and He will bring to remembrance what you need to see. Faith and trust will be your rock).

When we hear God speaking to us we should listen and follow His instructions. Just because the situation may seem right for us to act, we should wait for confirmation to do so or be at peace with the decision.

When God guides He will provide what is needed.

When we accept God at His Word we are able to move forward with strength and courage and do so with confidence. Because God's Word is Truth, when we follow it as directed it can only lead to success. Because God has promised to be with us, and He knows what lies ahead, we will not need to be afraid of the future.

Lord, I thank you for Your Word, for the wisdom and enlightenment, through Your Spirit, I have been given.

It is impossible for us to understand His riches, wisdom, knowledge, decisions, methods and timing.

God's sovereign will – will be done.

Respect those who have different beliefs which soothe their conscience, yet present the gospel and God will be their judge, not you. Do not cause another Christian brother or sister to stumble in their faith.

Accept each other, even with their faults, as Christ has accepted you.

God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

God showed His love for us in that He sent His only Son to die for us so that we could live (a Godly life) through Him. He did this not because we love Him but because He loved us first. He sent His Son to die in our place (*the wages of sin is death*), to be the propitiation, that is – satisfaction of payment made for the penalty of death – for us. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that **whosoever** believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

Sin and death spread to all men because through Adam sin was passed on to all, an inherited sinful nature. We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners.

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of My people He was stricken. My righteous Servant shall justify many for He shall bear their iniquities. By His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

Jesus has given us the opportunity to be reconciled to God.

If we love and strive for the things of the world we show we do not understand God's ways which shows we are not His. If we were, the Spirit would show us His truth.

We who have received reconciliation have been given the ministry of reconciliation which is to let others know their sins can be forgiven and plead with them to seek the understanding of the importance of accepting the free gift of salvation that has been laid before them. Remember, if someone holds out a gift to you, it has your name on it and they are requesting you to take it, it is not yours **until you accept it.**

God chooses the right man for the job He wants done.

Our ears – can be used to listen and fill our minds with immoral and unprofitable language or we can listen to Scripture, godly and generally clean and positive conversation. Our hands – we can use them to perform sinful actions or we can use them to help others. Our legs/feet – can take us to places we should not go or by the Spirit's leading, take us in directions we should go. Our mouth – can speak damaging,

hurtful words to others or speak words that build up and encourage others which can be the result of spreading the Gospel.

We are slaves to whom we obey, whether it be sin leading to death or obedience to Christ leading to righteousness. We were slaves to sin until hearing the Gospel and accepting it which in turn gave us the ability to be free to follow righteousness.

(Sinless) Jesus paid the penalty of death on the cross for your sins (which He did not deserve) and in turn, imputed (credited to your account) His righteousness to you (which you did not deserve) by His grace.

When you help others (feed/clothe/visit) especially those who cannot repay (as Jesus calls 'the least of these') He sees that as if you were doing it for Him (and only has eternal value to those who belong to God).

Lord, help me maintain the understanding that Your wisdom is always behind the guidance of Your direction for my life. (In my spirit I hear God say – Always remember – The battle belongs to Me, The Lord – My plans will always come to pass. Your part is to know Me, My power and to trust. You will never regret where I take you).

Now is the time to learn, grow and mature using what God has provided but we need to appropriate and utilize His provisions. No longer to be spoon-fed but self-sustaining in our foundational faith in God and continual search for His truth. We cannot successfully move ahead malnourished (in the Word). We need His Strength to progress forward. God supplies as needed – when needed. God supplies what we need for as long as we need it and no longer. We should not expect extraordinary supplies from God when we can obtain them through ordinary means.

When I was drawn to God and embraced Him, I can now see from where He brought me and how He Has blessed me. Knowing He has supplied my needs and directed my way when I had no clue where I was going and had nothing to fall back on - On more than one occasion – Has shown me He is faithful to supply my needs and will guide me in the way I should go.

Thank you Lord for saving me and making me the man I am as opposed to the man I was. I have such regrets that those who are the most important to me have resisted opportunities to see and experience those changes and still have the man 'I was' burned into their memories. But I shall move on, asking for your strength and insight to utilize the abilities you have given me to complete the tasks You have laid out for me. Lord, I'm thankful for Your help and guidance in the past and pray for success in accomplishing what lies ahead. (In my spirit I hear God say – You have seen My work in the past. Continue to strive to listen to My Spirit instead of your flesh and you will see My success through you).

Most Christians, though feeling pretty good about themselves before accepting the Lord, will admit they are extremely thankful that they have been changed and are not the man or woman they used to be. We remember very distinctly who we were and what were like before God changed our hearts. Those whose hearts have not yet been changed do not realize what God has waiting for you, a life you will regret not seeking earlier in life. With the Lord having your best interest at heart and your ability to put your troubles at His feet, life's pressures are lessened. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt.11:28-30)* *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."(1 Pet.5:6,7) "He brought me up also out of the pit of despair, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust..."(Psalm 40:2-4)

More importantly, (Isaiah 55:6) says, "*Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.*" But Simon Peter answered Him, "...Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68,69).

The time has come to step forward to fulfill God's plan for your life. The place ahead, occupied by the enemy, but given to you to make a difference in the land ahead which is your circle of influence. Be prepared for resistance when you invade the enemy's territory.

Don't base your reasons for moving forward on the tangible material things you hope it will bring you. Base it on being the right thing to do, the leading of the Spirit doing work to bring others into the kingdom.

When God has something to say to you He will say it anytime, anywhere and in a way you will understand. When God has something to say to us it is never frivolous – but serious in the respect of what He wants from you. God and His word are to be revered, esteemed and valued. We should seek discernment in whether a situation before us that requires action is positive, led by God, or negative, a rash, impulsive decision laid before us that will cost us dearly especially when we are looking for 'the easy way out' or the 'quick fix.'

Lord, give me the wisdom to seek discernment and Your guidance, especially in situations where the decision can make a major difference whether I move forward in Your will or cause hurt for myself or others and not produce any good from these decisions and actions. I need to seek God's discernment more so I don't repeat costly mistakes made in the past that came about because I did not seek God's wisdom first in the matter. (In my spirit I hear God say – Seek and you shall find).

Spiritual warfare is upfront and personal. It begins when you decide to follow the Spirit's leading, leading you to acknowledge Jesus Christ as *your* Savior and allowing Him to guide your thoughts and actions. When you were not interested in God, Satan had no reason to mess with you. You were no threat to him. When you lean toward God, he not only fears losing you but also any you may lead to God and any they may lead to God etc. etc. Remember, the battle has already been won!

Satan's goal – To direct our mind, energy and actions away from the Lord, preventing us from moving forward in God's work. Don't dwell on past failures – Forget the past and move forward. The enemy continues to bring it to our mind to derail us. Many (most?) of us can look back at how we conducted our lives, and the mess(es) we have left behind us and wish we could "cover our tracks." Since we cannot change the past, we need to forgive ourselves and move forward on a positive path.

Each man needs to 'clean up his act.' We all have more to clean up than we care to admit. One man's sin affects many. Sometimes we see it but most of the time we don't have a clue how many people are affected and how deep their hurts can go (especially children) because of our (usually) selfish sinful actions. Sooner or later "secret sins" will come to light. "*Your sin will find you out.*" When we sin it is better to acknowledge, confess and repent than to try to hide from an omniscient (all-knowing) God who always gives the sinner time to repent before He disciplines. God *always* gives warning before He disciplines.

Don't let deterrents, enticements or obstructions make you deviate or discourage you from staying on course.

We can lack victory and encounter defeat in our lives because of what we have done – Not God lacking in fulfilling His promises. Jesus said “*if you are not for Me you are against Me.*” Black or white-no grey. No straddling the fence. Who is your Master? Are you a ‘servant of sin?’ Or a ‘servant of righteousness?’ It is a choice we all have to make. When we know what is right, why is it so hard to follow?

Learn from the mistakes of others in order to see the correct path and the consequences of the unwise path.

Don’t put your fingerprints on God’s work. Man can add no beauty to what God has created, God does not need man’s help to complete His work. However, He gives us the opportunity to be part of His plan to accomplish His will.

Faith in and following the true God provides earthly and eternal benefits. When He sees us through tough times and rough obstacles in our life, we can be encouraged He will see us through future trials.

I need to continue to trust in God’s Word, for He has shown His power to exalt Himself by doing miracles and changing lives and circumstances that cannot be explained or duplicated by man. May I remain diligent in moving forward even though His timing may, in my eyes, be taking way too long - knowing His timing is always right.

Lord, strengthen my trust and faith in Your Word, Your promises, Your guidance and power to show Your strength in my life. (In my spirit I hear God say – Continue to trust, seek and follow – For I AM your strength).

Always be conscious that God sees all and remember to acknowledge and confess sin when committed and not be forced into acknowledgment.

Remember to employ meekness and tenderness when dealing with those who sin keeping in mind it could have been you. (and if it was you, how would you like to be approached?)

Attempt to keep lust under control (for lust is never satisfied) and leads to sin. Sin provides pleasure for a season but will cause great harm in the end.

Lord give me wisdom and insight to know You and trust You enough not to rush into foolish things that dishonor You and deter me from the path you have for me. (In my spirit I hear God say – My power is within you).

The Lord will not overlook the actions of anyone who dishonors His glory. The judgment may not be immediate as in the case of Achan (and ‘the accursed thing’ in the Book of Joshua-7) but it will be sure. God always gives opportunity for change. Though we hit the same wall over and over, He has given us the opportunity every morning (His mercies are new every morning – every day is a new opportunity) to utilize the power He has given us to overcome (especially ‘the accursed thing’ – that which is detrimental in my life that I will not release). We must deny ourselves (put away’ the accursed thing’) in order to allow God to move us forward according to His plan. God leads us to act in regards to our responsibility to move forward while waiting for His timing of circumstances to fall into place.

When God delivered the enemy (when He gave you the power to overcome) into your hands, you have a choice to make – Take the axe to the root – or let the root continue in your life – to eventually take a stranglehold and let God’s deliverance be to no avail.

When you are delivered, don’t backslide into bondage. Remember ‘the accursed thing.’ God has the power to deal with what is between you and achieving what He has planned for you.

God does not usually work to accomplish His will and goals in the same way or ways we would desire, predict or understand.

I need to focus more seriously re: the choices I make. Whereas in the past I nonchalantly (with indifference) moved forward not analyzing the ramifications of my actions. I should know better because I’ve made too many wrong choices that cost me dearly in a number of different respects including finances and relationships.

Lord, draw my thoughts to the need for prayer when I need wisdom to prevent unnecessary, negative consequences for the decision(s) I need to make. (In my spirit I hear God say – Keep your focus on Me and My Spirit will guide you as you need to go).

I realize that part of what I have been called to do – putting Christian information in printed form, in hopes of clarifying certain aspects of Christianity (as I wish I had had as a new or younger Christian) and passing it on when the opportunity arose - although I have begun and taken so long - continually feel the conviction and guilt for not continuing on and completing in a timely manner.

Because my days ahead are fewer than those behind me, I need to be ready, willing, and able to stress to and encourage those younger or newer in the faith that trusting in God and seeing this world for what it is and where it leads, from God’s perspective, is so comforting and such preparation for handling and enduring the trying times that life will bring their way.

When God has established you because you have said “Lord use me,” He will set your course and go before you and prepare your way.

You cannot ignore and disregard what God requires then think you can follow a formula to appease Him and make Him serve your needs. To oppose, reject or ignore God should be done expecting repercussions.

God always gives a warning (sometimes more than one) to caution and deter you from the ultimate judgment you will experience if you continue down an unwise path, not recognizing or heeding His warning.

God’s plans always have a purpose: 1) To bring us to our knees so we realize we cannot control our circumstances and have nowhere else to turn but to Him. 2) When we are His, His purpose is to refine us to work for our ultimate good. 3) When we are His, our obedience is tested, our spirituality refined or godly wisdom matured. 4) Our response to trials and tribulations may influence others when they see that those who have God as the Lord and Savior can face the difficult and unknown and sometimes known future with grace, confidence and resignation of our state as allowed by God and playing out for His purpose and glory.

When you have been given privileges and blessings, they can become of no value when you take them for granted or ignore them or abuse them. What God has given He can take away.

The protection of God comes not by things relating to God (professing, acting, doing, or saying) but by the possessing of God – genuine faith and trust resulting in actions led by God.

I realize that having “tasted and seen that the Lord is good,” though I’m not in the Word as much as I should be, I realize that when I’m out for any length of time I miss the confirmation, encouragement and confidence I receive when I hear or read the Word.

Satan will always fall before Christ. Error will always fall before truth. Profaneness will always fall before godliness. Corruption will always fall before grace in the hearts of the faithful. Truth will prevail.

If the conviction of the Spirit does not conquer a man, destruction will. None ever hardened their heart and prospered. Many refuse to believe their trials and tribulations are a judgment from God for their sinful actions or lifestyle. They would rather ignore His possible presence and interaction in their lives and instead will convince themselves it is just chance. Many refuse to see God’s providence and sovereignty in the world around them, especially their own circumstances. However, when they are acknowledged, we are praising God for who He is and all that encompasses.

Though God is supernatural and able to do the supernatural, although we wish to see it first hand, we need to accept that God can and probably will lead and guide us by simple basic directions and be open to recognizing His work in our lives no matter how apparently mediocre. God blesses obedience to His leading. You never know where the next step you take will lead you. One step at a time waiting on God for your next instruction. The small things are preparations for the big things God has planned for you.

God does not walk away from you when you walk away from Him. He doesn’t forget you when you forget Him.

Persevering faith will endure whereas, as in the parable of the sower (soils), many will turn away when the going gets tough. (*Mark 4:2-20; 1 John 2:19*)

Faith and trust in God vs fleshly logic and reason (which is so often not thought out).

When you drift away from God, no longer striving to love God and know Him better, the enemy no longer needs to mess with your life for you are no longer a threat. Not really the good news it may sound like.

Faith and trust in God, though it brings the enemy’s attacks, also brings God’s protection and blessings.

It is easy to walk with God when times are good, however perseverance and endurance through tribulation shows continuing saving faith. *Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights. Habakkuk 3:17-19*

Surrender; It is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. I do my best, (yet not always successfully), to ‘surrender all.’ Why should it be so difficult when most of the time I have no clue what direction to go and usually no direct control of my circumstances to direct change of the future – to the means and ends I desire? However God is sovereign and God is providential. Since I believe this and speak it, why do I not turn to Him daily, constantly asking Him for guidance and direction? I think a weak will needing focus is the answer.

When you reject God, you reap the consequences and His judgment for your actions. When you reject Him and the power He can bring to help you, you have only your power which is never a match for the enemy. God tests our faith when the circumstances seem to be overwhelmingly against us. Do we trust Him or concede that we are doomed to experience defeat?

Looking at all our trials from the standpoint of man, they most always look so totally overwhelming, seemingly impossible to overcome or triumph over. However, looking at a trial as God's preparing us, refining our faith and character, knowing He has brought this situation into our life to strengthen our faith and putting us in a position to acknowledge that without His help, without His Spirit within us, we could never see our way past the obstacle. But –

With His help, the path ahead of us is laid out and planned out with His sovereign, providential power to move the enemy out of our path to the success He has planned. We need to be able to see His work in our lives and be thankful and appreciative that we have His guidance and blessings and to remember to keep humility dominant over pride and self-accomplishment.

Satan, the enemy, knows what your 'natural man secret longings' are and promises to provide them easily if you follow his lead but he never provides as he promises. Satisfaction in attaining those longings is a mirage, the carrot and the stick, never being provided. Or, if it is provided, a price will have to be paid. A price always has to be paid when you reject God's plan and path for you and follow your own path.

Seeking God's leading by the Spirit during times when we are drawn to the ease of attaining earthly riches and desires will allow Him to be the light to your path, the path He wants to take you down through life.

When we find ourselves in trouble it is so tempting, yet the wrong way, to lie and deceive to try to minimize the uneasiness of the situation. Lying and deceit always affects others in our lives (usually in a negative manner).

Our situations and positions in life can change drastically tomorrow. David went from a shepherd to one in the king's court to an exile from his people and country and on to become King of Israel.

God's promises and His will - will not be thwarted. But we can hinder those plans along the way, as David did. As dependent as he had always been on God's leading and protection he somewhere along the way lost his 'God consciousness' in his thoughts and rationalized his actions.

Spiritual warfare – Knowing God is sovereign and in control of your life, guiding your steps, refining you along the way – and having to face the world – all those who appear to be against you, wanting to trap and destroy you – to overcome is to persevere and endure knowing that you walk by faith not by sight and God is watching and will reward that walk of faith.

Though you may have known God, when you reject God and go against what you know are His ways, Satan takes that opportunity and takes advantage of it. God may remove His hedge of protection from you for your rejection, Satan will take over and take you where you *never* would have thought you would go. God says "*come, let us reason together,*" yet Satan says you are right and everyone else is wrong.

The 'Sauls' (conflicts and hardships) of our lives are sent by God to reveal to ourselves our real attitudes and perspectives regarding the circumstances and people of our trials. Unless *confronted* by God with

those situations we will never consciously or voluntarily find out our true thoughts or positions about where we find ourselves. If we know God's Word, 99% of the time we will acknowledge our position or attitude is only leading us to a problematic future ('oh what needless pain we bear'). If we can come to our senses, being led by the Spirit, we can reset ourselves back on track.

Humility, over pride and self-sufficiency, is the only way to proceed forward toward the outcome God is leading you to, which is always be best, and when you look back it will be with gratitude, thanksgiving and satisfaction that God has made you the man/woman those who know you and love you can look up to as a godly man/woman.

Just as David would not raise his hand against Saul because he was God's anointed, we should not raise our hands against or have an attitude of looking down on others, those whom Christ died for, but see them as the men and women whom God is working on to make them the people He created them to be.

We should appreciate those who do us good while they are still alive. Too many of us have had regrets for not saying what we could have/should have said while we had the opportunity, to both family, friends and acquaintances who had a positive influence in our lives having brought us pleasure and joy.

Godly parents do not necessarily bring forth godly children. Being from a family of good people will not necessarily make one a good person. You should not expect a person to respond kindly to kindness, for you do not know his heart. Yet, you can be pleased when one allows his kindness to show through.

Be consistent in being honorable. What type of reputation do you have – or want? *Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1* Live and act in such a manner that even your enemy cannot speak ill of you. We may not know until long after the fact how God's providence has worked for our good, or the good of others, in spite of ourselves. Live your life honorably among unbelievers so when the grace of God visits their heart, they will respond with saving faith because he remembers the conduct of those who professed faith.

We should strive to maintain a good reputation, a spirit-filled behavior and wisdom in our actions, setting our minds to do the right thing.

Our love for our brother and concern for one another will set a good example for unbelievers watching if our walk matches our talk. Keep your speech clean, helpful and encouraging to all who hear. It's not what goes into a man that defiles him but what comes out of a man's heart (through his speech and actions).

We should strive to live a pure and blameless lives knowing that God's delay is for the purpose of allowing many more to hear, understand and accept the gospel message of salvation. Being 'born again' we are transformed in thought, attitudes and perspectives which are brought into line with 'the Mind of Christ.' Each person must follow his conscience regarding things that are not specifically commanded or prohibited in Scripture.

Wisdom and foolishness live so close side by side within us, but trusting God – He knows what you do – lets wisdom rise to the top. Revisit Proverbs. Let wisdom preside throughout your thoughts for you will always be better for it.

Vacillating between wisdom and foolishness. As a Christian, having seen God work for our good many times over in our lives, we still – walk the line of a fool so many times when temptation rears its head.

The solutions that giving into temptation at times seems to provide are always temporary, a momentary reprieve from our immediate predicament but cannot ever be a positive, permanent solution. When you come back to your senses and realize your predicament is not gone, and now, before you can move forward, you may have to go back and rectify the problem(s) you created. You tried to go over or around your problem but now realize, as always, you actually have to go through it and deal with it. If you would have dealt with it first, you would be ahead of the situation.

Defeat is usually always 'self-inflicted.' God's Holy Spirit *always* warns us to stop following a dangerous, deceitful, destructive path. When we ignore the warnings, after we have paid the price, we realize we could have avoided this fate had we only heeded those warnings. In trying to achieve a sinful or selfish goal, many times it comes at the expense of good things or good people in your life. God can and will forgive sin and the deserved penalty of death, yet still allow the consequences that that sin produces.

David was a man who, though through earlier times in his life, knew God was sovereign and in control but it probably wasn't until God had placed him as King of Israel (Israel and Judah) that he could reflect back and see how "...*all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28), to those who seek God's will and submit to His wisdom. Every experience is a training ground for our future.

The lesson (if possible), and it usually is, is to stop and evaluate your steps and where they will lead you, before you take those steps. Do you still want to go that way? Considering what lies ahead will allow God to direct your steps. The rightful place of God is in the center of your life - everyday including your home, your job, your activities and your relationships. Give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to guide you through those events.

Something in our life has to die in order for us to move forward and live the life God has set before us. It is the paradox that "*If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for Me, you will find it...*" Matthew 10:39 The dividing line is 'surrender' which equals salvation by transformation. God's work in our lives has a purpose. It gives our life purpose.

Mistakes we make in our life do not change God's purpose and plan for our life. We will reap what we sow, experience and endure the consequences but God makes all things work for good and His purpose will not be thwarted. However, looking to God for His guidance before our decisions will bring His guidance and eliminate needless reaping of unnecessary, negative aspects that would otherwise follow.

Satan's plan for everyone is to lure us into deception in order to destroy us or render us ineffective in revealing and proclaiming the Word of God. He wants to refocus your attention from the truth and facts. When he wears you down, makes you weary, that's when he 'kicks you while you're down.' But God's sovereign providence overrules the plans of all. God will deal with those whose goal is to work against or destroy those who are His own.

Do not: 1) Shut the door to your heart; keeping out what God wants in. 2) Put out the lamp of God's work in your life. Do not quench the fuel-source, the Holy Spirit. *Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6* 3) Ignore the value of prayer, thankfulness and praise. 4) Forget that obedience to God's Word is what displays that you are one of His own.

Submission to authority is what allows a ruling authority to exist and do its job, which is to lay out the system where all can exist in a peaceful and orderly manner. God, as Creator, and the One who knows what is best, has laid out the system that when followed leads to the best life and outcome for those who submit.

I am not ashamed of the gospel because it carries along with it the power of God to accomplish the salvation He provided for all who would believe. Romans 1:16

Joseph, by faith, not understanding the reasons for his predicaments, still understood that God was in control and as most of us find out as time goes on, the circumstances of our lives, and the lessons learned, lead us to a better life and understanding of our place in life.

The Spirit of God comes upon man in order to have him speak the words God wants known.

Unless we have the faith of a child (complete dependence) we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. We are told He loves us as a father (with unconditional love) who has our best interests at heart. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Hope cannot be seen. Only what cannot be seen can be hoped for. That which is seen is only temporary. *We walk* (with perseverance) *by faith not by sight.* God has drawn us and we have met Him. In our belief, faith and trust we are saved.

In our lives (all men/women) go through the following issues. Without Christ you are on your own to determine the paths you will take to alleviate the situation and you are responsible for the ramifications. Tribulation – Adversity and hardships we encounter throughout the course of our lives. Distress – Times when we, in our anxiety, uneasiness and apprehension come to a point of feeling out of control of the situation. Persecution – being picked on, harassed or targeted in a negative manner for a particular reason or belief. Famine – When something is lacking; a shortage, such as food or finances. Nakedness – Baring all, whether regarding clothing or an aspect of revealing to all a particular belief without any obscuring issues. Peril – A danger or threat ahead.

With God, He has promised to provide for all the needs of His own. He gives us access to Him in prayer. Why do you pray to God? Because there is nothing you can do to change many circumstances you find yourself in. You pray because you know only the sovereign, providential God, who is in control of all things, can change your situation. For most of us prayer has been our last resort when we have first tried everything we can think of to direct our situation. However, many times we see these circumstances approaching and hope for the best, when we should pray for the wisdom and direction God has promised if we would merely ask! We should also be thankful for His Holy Spirit within us that comforts us and gives us the strength during difficult times.

God has placed the cornerstone of Jesus and His resurrection, as the foundation of faith for salvation. He will use justice and righteous to test the foundation of our faith. *‘...The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing, and it is wonderful to see. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; anyone on whom it falls it will scatter him like dust.’ Matthew 28:42,45*

The Jews were ignorant of God’s way of a true relationship with Him. They instead followed ways they felt were bringing them close to God, that was trying to obey the laws of God ‘according to their view.’ It is up to us to *know* what He wants of us instead of doing what we think or feel is the right way.

What fills and controls the heart will proceed from the mouth. From a good heart flow good words (and actions). From an evil heart flow evil words (and actions).

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:9,10 To be saved one must call upon the name of the Lord. To do that they must first believe in Him. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, those who bring good news!"

Each and every day and each and every night, the creation of heaven and earth declares the awesome complexity of creation and the only possible fact – is that of a Creator. From the beginning, the awesome display of God has been declared to all. *Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of His great power and incomparable strength, not a single one of them is missing. Isaiah 40:26*

If you love your neighbor as yourself you will honor him and do him no harm. You will not steal, kill, covet or testify against him falsely. Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is within your power to help them. If you can help your neighbor now, don't say 'come back tomorrow and then I will help you.' As much as is possible, work hard at living in peace with others.

Though God chastises us, He will show compassion and mercy and will not leave us in that state continually. God chastises us for our own good and we should realize this and accept it in a manner that demonstrates to others godly qualities in our life displaying justice, mercy and humility.

When we follow and trust the Lord. He will provide for our needs, answer our call, protect us, honor us, rescue us and give us salvation. When we *pursue* a life of godliness He will *provide* us a life of godliness. God's Word has been given to us to show us the way we are to live our lives.

Training and education are not substitutes for the ability and wisdom only God can give. Trusting in the wisdom of God's control in our lives will give us confidence to move forward without fear, knowing through God's protection we have security.

The godly know right from wrong and give good counsel with God's law in their heart. He keeps us on His path. Those who follow God will have understanding and wisdom. We should use our time wisely, growing in the wisdom of God.

When we need wisdom to deal with a situation, God says we should ask Him and He will supply liberally. The Lord has our best interest at heart and tells us when we call on Him and pray to Him, He will hear us. When we seek Him we will find Him. When we call on Him for answers He will show them to us. When we trust in the Lord and not ourselves, He will guide us as we should go. God does not lie as does man. He does not change His mind.

God sovereignly protects His people. When we love and trust Him, He will deliver us and honor our trust in Him.

By seeking to know, understand and follow God's Word we allow ourselves to be transformed, changed from who we used to be into the person God is leading us to be. A person whose heart and life has been transformed never regrets who they have become and are proud that God chose them to do His work.

God wants us to realize, know and understand that He is the one and only God, to whom all, whether now in submission, or later in condemnation, will acknowledge Him as Lord. Continued obstinateness (unwillingness to change) will bring one to a point of no return, where redemption is not possible. Though God delays, there will be a final judgment. When man rejects God's truth, spiritual darkness will rule his heart and determine his judgment.

Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23,24 As the Word states, we should not boast of our wisdom, strength or riches. Our only boast is that we know the Lord as He has revealed Himself. Our conscience should give us the confidence that we are living our lives as directed by God. We should not commend ourselves but live our lives as to be commended by God.

When people don't know God or have any understanding of who He is, what He has done or what He requires of man, they tend to see it as foolishness because they are not open to the knowledge or wisdom offered. We are to understand our calling and live accordingly, praising God and thanking Him for who He is and what He has done.

When we know and understand God and His work, in reality we know more and are wiser in truth than most others – even those in high positions socially, intellectually or monetarily. God has the wisdom and abundance to impart to us and *implores* us to ask for His help. When we realize our inadequacies God gives wisdom without partiality for all those who ask.

As a preface to this next comment regarding alcohol – I do occasionally have a drink – But I have lived long enough to remember the foolish over-indulging of my youth and earlier, younger adulthood. We all know the following statement is true by our experiences with family, friends, acquaintances and general observations. Intoxication by alcohol invariably brings out the stupid, foolish thoughts and actions a person would not consider while sober. There are many dire circumstances, physically, mentally and lifestyle wise to those who excessively indulge in alcohol. And along with drugs, the biggest problem is that one never really knows where the line between moderation or addiction lies for them until that place has been reached.

The believer trusts in God as his strength to overcome, his refuge and salvation, all of which enable him to endure and persevere through his trials. In doing what you know is right; a good conscience is your reward. The ungodly will reap what they sow in the consequences of their actions. God's will for us - To pray for all men specifically and individually, making our requests, interceding for God's mercy on their lives and for their salvation.

When you don't know the answer to the question, the solution to the problem or the 'why' of the situation- turn your focus to what you do know- the goodness, graciousness and mercy of God that is focused on you as His child. God's Word stands firm, always true and never changing. It is through God's Word that we are transformed because we follow it as guide for it gives us understanding and peace.

God's Word has shown us the benefits received by many who trusted in Him. Having these examples should encourage us to strive to remove the things that hinder our progress.

Confession of sin removes the weight of guilt and brings forgiveness. We confess our sins and acknowledge they are against God alone (regardless of who it was directed at). Confession and forgiveness brings refreshing and the desire to tell others of the cleansing forgiveness brings.

Because we know God and the power and wisdom of His Word we know it is right to praise Him, yet we still find ourselves struggling to do so because we always seem to have a problem accepting His timing of the circumstances in our life.

God hates the pride of man and will bring down a prideful man from his perch. Pride is what drove Lucifer from heaven.

We were once far from God – but now through His mercy we are His. It is our job to proclaim God's message to the people and leave the blessings or consequences of their decisions to Him.

False teachers, passing themselves off as truth, as angels of light and ministers of righteousness, counterfeit God's truth any way they can to deceive. Their destruction is the reward of false teachers for the harm they have done. They revel in deceitfulness and are a disgrace and a stain among Christians.

Always keep the commands of the Lord in the forefront of your consciousness. The more you concentrate on them the less the draws of the flesh will pull you away. We are to conduct ourselves as a vessel of honor, one that God will use. Pursue faith, love and godly companions. Don't get involved in matters that are of no consequence or that do not concern you.

We should grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord. A deeper knowledge will help us grow in maturity in the faith, able to withstand the enemy. We have heard the truth and trust that God's Word and commands are true. That should give us the basis to judge all that contradicts that Word as false.

We should give our best effort to pass on God's Word in a clear, complete and accurate manner. We know the Scriptures outline the truth of godly living and equip us to do the good work of God's will. Those who have God in their lives are not dominated by sin – Those who are dominated by sin do not have God in their lives.

We know that not all things are good – but we know that God works all things for the good of those who are His called. Through Him we are chosen, justified and will be glorified. Because God gave His Son for us, will He not give us what we need to persevere? Nothing can separate us from the love of God. *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 8:35-39

We need to realize that Jesus endured all He went through for what He knew He would accomplish by doing so. He has provided us the faith to endure, knowing what lies ahead is far greater than the satisfaction of sin 'for a day.'

In His humanity Jesus experienced sufferings and temptation and is able to relate to our needs. As our High Priest we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace for help and mercy.

When Jesus died on the cross He met sins legal demands on the sinner and broke the power of sin. When we are in the Lord the domination of sin's power over us has been broken.

We should understand that our relationship with the Lord should be greater than any other earthly relationship including that of our immediate family. We should love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbors (those within our power to help) as ourselves.

Our relationship with the Lord should always be first priority – Not doing deeds we feel are for the benefit of the faith. With our right relationship on track the right deeds with right attitudes will flow from our lives. No matter what good deeds we do, no matter how admirable it is of no value, it is worthless in the eyes of God unless done in love.

Those who overcome through Christ will not be hurt by the Second Death which is spiritual and eternal. *And the One sitting on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new!" And then He said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true: It is finished! I am the A and the Z—the Beginning and the End. I will give to the thirsty the springs of the Water of Life—as a gift! Everyone who conquers will inherit all these blessings, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But cowards who turn back from following Me, and those who are unfaithful to Me, and the corrupt, and murderers, and the immoral, and those conversing with demons, and idol worshipers and all liars—their doom is in the Lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death." Revelation 21:5-8*

We have been told and believe it to be the truth, and if not having experienced it personally have seen, that the ways of the world do not satisfy and cannot compare to the stated eternal rewards for obedience.

When we depart from our love and relationship with the Lord, we are being drawn away to another, which is spiritual adultery. Spiritual unfaithfulness leads to following the ways of the world away from God. The nature of man's spirit is bent on evil and will not change until it has embraced God. Sin is contagious – righteousness is not!

When we are saved our works will be to build foundations of the faith in others or works that are of no spiritual value – nonetheless, we will never forfeit salvation. Nothing we ever do for the Lord is in vain. All will be rewarded.

When we come to God in humility, accepting our lot in life but seeking Him and His best for us, we will receive His best. When we, in pride, seek all the best this world has to offer, we may possibly receive it at the cost of our souls. To eternally reap torment. *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Mark 8:36*

When one comes to Christ he comes from darkness into light. But when one is in the dark but thinks he is in the light, he remains in darkness. Because God does not change, His sovereign election of believers is irrevocable.

When the believer does not exhibit Christian qualities he may be hard to distinguish from unbelievers. He may not realize all he has been saved from. The work of the Lord in our lives is like a refiner's fire to burn the dross of iniquity and a launderer's soap to wash away the stain of sin.

Our patience and character grows through trials. We need to ask God for the wisdom to handle our trials properly. Trials are to test our faith. Salvation is our reward for believing and trusting in Christ.

Though pressured in life we will endure and act accordingly to show our faith in the Lord. We, as Christians, should look past the temporal to the eternal. Man cannot see the whole scope of God's work – beginning to end.

God has told us His thoughts and ways are not like man's thoughts and ways. His thoughts are higher than man's thoughts. *For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:9* – Job realized, in his understanding, he would never know God's sovereign and providential ways. (See *Job chapters 38-42*).

Doubt is inevitable in the believer's life. Through struggles, tragedies and situations that seem unfair, we trust in the truth we have been taught – that God is faithful, eternal, unchanging and will always love us and see us through difficult times. He allows what happens and we are to seek if the doors of opportunities that are opened are there for us to pursue or to recognize as options He has set in place for us to apply His wisdom.

We should try not to be impatient with God's leading. Though it may seem to move slowly it will not be a day late. It will come in God's appointed time. God is not bound by time and will bring our circumstances to fall into place at the proper time.

Justification by faith and justification by keeping the law are mutually exclusive.

The Glory of nature takes a back seat to the glory of God.

Through the prophets and other Old Testament examples, God has shown us that the proper perspective and attitude of trust in Him, regardless of the circumstances surrounding us, can strengthen our confidence in and our commitment to the Lord. Trusting in God is never the wrong move, despite the outcome of the situation. Not all things are good but God works all things for the good of those who are His. We may not see or understand it now but it is a promise of God who is faithful.

The Lord is my Guide/ my Provider/ my Rest/ my Moral Guide/ my Strength/ my Comfort/ my Protection/ my Grace/ the Provider of my Blessings, Security and Salvation.

We should persistently evangelize when the opportunity arises knowing God's judgment is sure and coming soon. We need to know the Word so we are not led astray by those who would distort the truth.

When we come to faith in Jesus we died to the dominant power of sin and were raised to new life in His resurrection. When Jesus died He broke the power of sin and death and has given us the power to overcome sin's dominance in our lives.

We need to remove from our lives all that deters us from Godly living. Through integrity, living by the Word, staying away from the things we know will hinder our walk and staying close to the Word, people and things that draw us near to God, the lighted path ahead will remain our guide.

There are so many whose pride, arrogance, loftiness and insolence have such a stranglehold on their perception of their place in this world.

Our tongue and the corrupt speech it produces can do great damage. With the help of God's Spirit in us we can reduce praising God and cursing man with the same tongue.

The most amazing thing about God's forgiveness is its completeness. Our slate of sin taken away, wiped clean. Yet it is accessible to all who will receive the forgiveness He offers.

When God prospered His people and they still rejected Him, He told them to 'consider your ways.' Many who work so hard to attain and succeed to fulfill their expectations, find that satisfaction is rarely achieved without God being part of the equation.

Though children many times follow in their parents footsteps (traits), when they are good – that is good. When they are not good or profitable, they need not follow those traits. God has, does and will continue to transform those who seek Him, from the past rejections of Him by family, friends and acquaintances into men/women of God who love Him, follow Him and live desiring to be part of and bringing others into His kingdom.

We are all stained by sin and need salvation and the imputed righteousness of Christ. A popular contemporary Christian song lyric says "we are no longer defined by the wreckage we left behind" We can progress forward in a positive manner. It is the second chance offer that so many seek.

Sexual sin ruins lives, marriages, families, friendships and reputations. Think twice first and pray for strength to turn from it. Use what you have been given, the ability to walk in the Spirit, putting off your old nature, walking in the renewed spirit of your mind, pursuing righteousness by fighting the good fight of faith and fleeing youthful lusts (which do not only apply to the youth).

God's Word continually warns of His judgment and His wrath. What lies ahead for those who reject Him is described in manners none would desire to experience if given the chance. And yet, given the choice, many through pride and thinking more of themselves than they ought, still reject God's alternative offer.

Keeping in perspective the eternal glory ahead we can view our afflictions as light and temporary.

Keeping anger under control and dealing with it immediately keeps it from being used against you.

Reverence of the Lord, knowing His mercy towards us, helps us walk devoted to Him. Honorable conduct observed may eventually honor God by changing a heart, bringing it to God. Honorable conduct and assurance of salvation brings the peace of God to an individual.

Fearing (reverence for) the Lord brings His mercy, a strong foundation and freedom from fear knowing He is on our side. Trusting the Lord makes Him our Refuge, our Fortress and brings along with it wisdom and discretion which will keep you on the right path in life.

We have the Spirit's power to focus our minds on God's Word, to be sober minded and to rest in our hope in the grace of Christ. We can be vigilant and steadfast in the faith resisting the persistent spiritual warfare directed at those who seek to follow God.

We strive to avoid that which the Lord hates; pride, lies, shedding innocent blood, devising wicked plans, being quick to do evil, being a false witness, sowing discord and not letting our anger give place to the devil. We do attempt to live by speaking the truth, putting away bitterness and wrath, being kind to one another, speaking to edify and build up others.

Knowing God's Word as Truth allows us to discern false teaching. He who speaks truth and does righteously shall abide with the Lord – those who do not – will not. Let your speech be with grace for an encouraging word lifts a heavy heart. Gossip can separate the best of friends. Show wisdom and let your character shine by pursuing discipline of honorable speech and conduct.

The fear of God will determine the type of work we will do because we know all will be judged.

God wants His ways to be known and practiced as to the 'spirit' and not the 'letter' of the law. We are to do justly, show mercy and walk humbly with God.

God will guide us to places we never knew existed, let alone how to get there.

Confession is to acknowledge and agree that what I have done (in thought, word or deed) is contrary to what God states is right. To confess is to close the gap to God that sin has created.

There is a purpose and a time for all things when done in God's time and God's will. When we pursue and rush things to bring them to fruition before God's timing, they will not have their complete benefit.

Attitude and reverence toward God is a position of the heart and more important than the position of the body (as on our knees).

Upon accepting the Lord as our Savior we are accepted and set apart by and for God, regardless of our past.

As Christians, we regret when our actions (sins) betray our beliefs and are seen by those whom we wish to get the Gospel message to. We wish to set an example, but how true the saying "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven." Our greatest concern is to bring the word of salvation to those who are not aware of the offer of God's grace and forgiveness and to reinforce and encourage those who know and trust in Him and His promises.

Christ calls us to come to Him and release our burdens and accept the peace and rest He offers. To give ourselves over to Jesus and accept His offer is easier than bearing our burdens alone. Though God loves us, He gives us the ability to stray from the best path for our life – many times to find ourselves in a type of quandary, trouble where we find ourselves in situations we cannot control or remedy. Situations that cause us to be sad, dejected, miserable, unhappy or depressed, wondering 'what do we do next?' Believers have God's Spirit to guide and comfort them while unbelievers have only friends, family or acquaintances to turn to for help, sympathy or empathy. Though that may be sufficient to help you through some of the time, remember, they are but fallible men (and women) having their own problems and probably not handling them all that well. When God is the anchor of your life, though you will stray, He never lets you go beyond acceptable bounds but draws you back. *"And if you leave God's paths and go astray, you will hear a voice behind you say, "No, this is the way; Walk Here. Isaiah 30:21*

God uses events in our lives that seem to be works and plans of evil against us, to actually be the means of achieving His will for our lives. We understand (and are thankful for) His promise of working 'all things'

for our good and receive encouragement when our life's situations seem discouraging due to either the work of others against us or our own wrong deeds.

Although being saved (knowing Christ as my Savior) for years, God brought me to the place where I knew I had no control over my current situation and needed to turn to Him for help. He drew me into His Word and to the understanding I needed to know Him not only as my Savior but to comprehend, as much as I could, of what He had revealed of Himself. He saw me through those times and gave me a new perspective and an increased knowledge of His promises to me.

By His grace He saved me from a falling into a distressing despair that my reaping what I had sown could have sent me. I was given guidance and direction. I had been given many things I did not deserve, a woman I should have cherished and children many would have given anything to have. I had never searched out God's standards I should have lived up to, that would have made me see and appreciate all He had blessed me with.

However, reaping what I had sown, God took me from where I was and having already previously separated me for Himself, began the transformation of my heart, soul and mind and led to the path I now travel which is to pass the Gospel on to both the young and those in the last season of their lives He puts in my path. If not me- then who?

Even in our darkest moments, those who are the Lords can count on His compassion, graciousness and mercy in our times of need.

We should always strive to be better Christians but it should be secondary to our actually living it out by doing what we can for others when it is within our power to do so. God – please purify our motives for the work we do so they do not become hay and stubble.

Trials bring our focus back to God. Because of trials and afflictions we tend to take God more seriously. We need to understand that God has our best interests at heart when He brings trials into our life – it is to redirect us. Sorrow is better than laughter, for it is sorrow that transforms the heart.

Trials mature our faith and bring us patience and a realization of the depth of our trust in God. Endurance through temptation will show us God is faithful to see us through and will give us faith in His faithfulness. ...*The Just shall live by faith. Romans 1:17*

God has given us hope through the resurrection of Jesus and promises us an inheritance of eternal life. Our faith will withstand all testings and the reward is the salvation of our souls.

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4

You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God... For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places... We know that we are children of God and that the whole world around us is under the control of the evil one. Ephesians 2:2, 6:12; 1 Jn 5:19

Jesus speaking stated *“Anyone who isn’t with Me opposes Me, and anyone who isn’t working with Me is actually working against Me - Matthew 12:30.* We are controlled by God or controlled, even if unknowingly or unaccepting, by Satan. Too many live with false assumption and philosophy that if they are good, moral people they are going to heaven. God does not grade on a curve as many of us were familiar with in school. ***The fact that we believe we are and have been good moral people and better than many others is not what decides whether or not we will be welcomed into heaven.*** Many to this day say, “I’m a good person.” But we all know that throughout our lives we have made wrong choices and reacted impulsively in ways we regretted and also have said things we should not have, both towards God and our fellow man. Most of those times could probably fall into the category of sin. (*Romans 3:10*) states *“There is none righteous, no not one.”* And in (*Isaiah 64:6*) *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness are as filthy rags.”* And the results as stated in (*Rom.6:23*), *“For the wages of sin is death...”* The law makes the whole world guilty before God. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within us that changes our perspectives, attitudes and actions. God both molds our wills to obey and then gives us the energy to work His will in our life as it pleases Him.

Wisdom and logic do not always guarantee a good outcome because of so many unpredictable contingencies. All are under God’s providential, sovereign will and His ways and methods are beyond our knowing or understanding. At times, possibly in retrospect, we may think we understand why things happened as they did but that is purely speculation on our part.

Satan comes to kill, steal and destroy. Jesus came to give His life as a sacrifice for us (once and for all) and with our accepting this as truth we have been pulled from the grip of Satan. God whom we serve is able to save us from those who would oppress us. Even if He does not we will never deny Him as our God – our Lord – our Savior. *Psalm 56:11-13 - I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me? I will fulfill my vows to you, O God, and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for your help. For You have rescued me from death; you have kept my feet from slipping. So now I can walk in your presence, O God, in your life-giving light. Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if He doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”*

God’s first work is Salvation – God’s second work is Reconciliation.

God knows all we do and when we persevere following His words and commandments, He will save us from the testing the rest of the world will have to endure. The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right. His ears are open to their calls for help. The Lord blesses those who follow Him and will give just judgment to those who oppose Him.

By receiving the Spirit of God we have become as sons of the Father, receiving His power to endure our suffering and inherit our eternal life as we are glorified through the Father/Son relationship.

God is not limited in who He works through or how He will accomplish His will.

With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us, we have what we need to overcome the obstacles the enemy confronts us with. We are in the Lord’s hands and only what He allows will befall us. We need to realize only God is sovereign, providential and in control. More importantly, He is with us and for us

forever. *Whom have I in heaven but You? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever. Psalm 73:25-26*

We should discipline ourselves in a manner where our actions do not contradict our words – not only to talk the talk but to walk the walk.

Satan is the God of this world and its world system. We follow God who is against all Satan stands for. Satan will do all he can to hinder our progress.

God, our Creator, who is all powerful lets us know we cannot understand His ways – yet also makes us aware that if we trust Him and be patient, keeping the truth we know at the forefront of our attitude and perspective, He will give us what we need to endure our trials and to progress in the work we do for Him. Christ's Spirit is in us and has provided the strength to see us through.

I need to constantly remind myself that God is in control. He is faithful and His Word says if I put my trust in Him, even though I make mistakes and err in judgment – *Romans 8:28* states God will work all things out for my good (in spite of myself). *Romans 8:31,32* states if He gave us His Son will He not give us all things... (that we need)? *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:28-32*

It gives God Glory when He does in our life things that we know we, nor anyone else, could accomplish. Knowing He is in us and for us should give us courage and confidence.

All man's problems come from within Him – out of his heart and from the lust and desires of the flesh. Envy and other unchecked emotions can lead us blindly to do things, that because of God's laws written on our heart, we ordinarily would not do and we may become filled with 'all unrighteousness,' doing and being all God has warned us against.

David was strong and courageous, trusting in God for his victories. Although it always sounds good and logical to trust in the Lord, because of man's natural bent away from the things of God – we allow ourselves to rationalize why we need to do it our way.

God never leaves "loose ends." What He starts or ordains will be completed.

The Lord knows how to deliver the Godly out of temptation and reserves judgment for the unjust. When we cry out to God with humility His Word states He hears us and will deliver us from our troubles. *The afflictions of the righteous are many but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Psalm 34:19*

When we cast our burdens on the Lord, He will uphold the believer through the struggles of life showing His will and power to save us. We know God is working all events and circumstances in our life for our

good, to conform us to the likeness of Jesus. We know He has called us, justified us and glorified us when we first believed.

When we first believed, confessed our sins and were forgiven (justified-just as if we had never sinned), our sins were forgiven – a complete cleansing. As we live and sin daily (for we live in this sinful body), and as we walk through this world, its filth rubs off on us. Confession of sin and forgiveness of other's offences toward us is like washing our feet – for the rest of us is clean.

We are to know, understand and obey the Word, using that knowledge and understanding as the guide for our lives, to direct our thoughts and ways. All behavior, including the motives for that behavior, should be guided by doing them for God's glory. Keeping ourselves in the position of being above reproach will keep us from evil and the appearance of evil. Striving to remain blameless of wrong actions will help keep us on God's path for our life. Because we know God and have His Spirit within us we are able to control our desires as we should – if we make that choice.

God calls us to come to Him willingly – We should be pleased that the Father drew us to Christ and we should want to make all the glorious benefits we have received known to others who really have nothing solid, truthful and of value to be their guide through the remainder of their life. If they live any length of time, life's experiences will prove the void in their lives even after accomplishing worldly goals. However, there are always those who reject God and will undermine another's attempt to put his life on the right track, one with purpose and eternal life in heaven.

We know that when we do right, even negative consequences are outweighed by our future glory. We need to concentrate on the spiritual aspects of our circumstances.

Lord, control my motives – Keep them pure. Keep me occupied – for idleness will lead me where I don't want to go. Keep me focused.

We should continue to put God first in our lives and our thoughts. Putting our love and trust in Him knowing He is the only one worthy of that devotion. Wherever we are we can and should praise God for His goodness, strength and the power of His awesome acts – toward us and for us.

Jesus Christ – Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will reign forever with judgment, justice and righteousness. He is our Helper, Keeper, Protector, Preserver and Redeemer. God is sovereign, providential and reigns over all generations.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared Him and always thought about the honor and esteem of His name. "They will be Mine," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. "On the day when I act in judgment, they will be My own special treasured possession. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. Malachi 3:16-17

The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. 2 Chron. 16:9

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? Ezekiel 18:23

Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7

Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God, having taken upon Himself man's every sin *past, present and future*, and paying the penalty of death, (once and for all) in turn gave us His righteousness.

However... “ This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. But now God has shown us a different way to heaven - not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says He will accept and acquit us - declare us 'not guilty' - if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us 'not guilty' of offending Him, if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in His kindness freely takes away our sins. "For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath." (Romans 3:22-26)

"For salvation that comes from trusting Christ - which is that we preach - is already within easy reach of each of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths. For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation." "For the Scriptures tell us that no one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect: they have all the same Lord who generously gives His riches to all those who ask Him for them. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:8-13)
(Delivered from judgment for your sins and separation from God for all eternity)

The New Testament is CONTAINED in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is EXPLAINED in the New Testament.

The New Testament is CONCEALED in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is REVEALED in the New Testament.

The New Testament AUTHENTICATES the Old Testament.

The Old Testament ANTICIPATES the New Testament.

The New Testament LIES HIDDEN in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament LIES OPEN in the New Testament.

The Old Testament PREDICTS a person.

The New Testament PRESENTS that person.

The Gospel

There is no entrance into heaven without the one and only proper qualification. It will be your answer to God's question "*What did you do with My son Jesus?*" There are many ways to say what you believe the gospel means. God knows the knowledge He has brought to you and He knows your heart. One type of acceptable answer would be, "*I accepted Jesus as my Savior after hearing and believing the gospel message - which is, God sent Jesus to this earth to make God known to man and for the purpose of dying, in my place, for my sins, that is - my redemption. I believe by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and God as the 2nd Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), who came to this world in human flesh, the only sinless man, who died on the cross, shedding His blood for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was and to give us hope. It is my responsibility to acknowledge and confess my sins and to repent, turning away from my sins and to ask for forgiveness. Salvation is wholly of God by grace,(unmerited, undeserved favor), on the basis of our trust in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood on the cross, and not on the basis of anything we can do. More importantly, understanding that it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that shows He conquered death and gives us the assurance that all He said is true. The redemption of man being accomplished by His death on the cross and three days later, the greatest event to ever take place on earth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Yes, the Resurrection. It is the reason we celebrate Easter and do so in the springtime. It is the beginning of new life. The beginning of our new life, (no matter how old we may be), when we acknowledge that He died in our place for our sins.*"