

GOD'S PLAN AFTER SALVATION

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“Buy TRUTH, and do not sell it”
(Proverbs 23:23a).

Indeed, truth (i.e. sound Bible teaching) is hard to come by. Therefore when God, in His infinite grace, leads you to the truth, you are to embrace it and cherish it. You are to hold to it tenaciously. For in it is hidden the capacity to enjoy life, happiness and blessings in time and eternity to come.

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The Lighthouse



Historically a lighthouse is a tower shaped building designed to emit light using a system of lamps and lenses. It shines its light into the darkness as an aid to navigation and to safely guide captains and sailors at sea. They can withstand the fiercest storms, so their light is always available for any who look to them. Lighthouses are used to mark dangerous coastlines, hazardous shoals and reefs, and safe entries to harbors.

As the lighthouse illuminates and guides the safe passage for the sailor on the dark and dangerous sea, so the light of God's word illuminates the believer's path and guides him so he may navigate safely through the dangers of this world.

The lighthouse provides a perfect metaphor or visual symbol for the guiding light we find in the words of the Bible. It is our prayer that *God's Plan After Salvation* will shed light on your path in the journey of your Christian life. We trust that it will help to establish the guiding light of God's word in your soul.

Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved brother, Pastor Dr. Chinyere Onwubiko, a person whose love for our God is far more important to him than the things of this world. Someone who, when called by God to serve in a small church, Berean Bible Church of Baysprings, Mississippi, did not hesitate to respond. He left his position as Professor and Chairman of Mechanical Engineering at Tennessee State University to serve God as a full-time pastor. You are a man of great humility and integrity—I salute you!



Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path
(Psalm 119:105).



Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying,
“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me
will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life”
(John 8:12).



I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone
who believes in Me will not remain in darkness
(John 12:46).

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Acknowledgment

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May I express my gratitude to all the supporters of Grace Evangelistic Ministries. You have been faithful in supporting this grace ministry from the very beginning. Your participation in this ministry has already produced both tangible and intangible results. "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

A bundle of thanks goes to my beloved wife and dearest friend — Gloria Onwubiko. She has been my support throughout this work. Her words of encouragement are remarkable beyond expression.

To crown my gratitude, my standing ovation goes to my BEST friend, the King of kings, Lord of lords, the bright Morning Star — my eternal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the One who made it possible for me to have the wonderful privilege of communicating the Word of God in this work.

Preparation for Studying God's Word

Open Invitation: There is only one BARRIER between you and the gracious God — faith in His unique Son, Jesus Christ. Your entrance into God's plan begins with your complete and total trust in the person of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When our Lord Jesus Christ was on the Cross, He had you on His mind. There was never a sin (yours or anyone's) committed that was not poured out on Jesus Christ on the Cross (I Peter 2:24). He endured all afflictions so that He might pave a way for you to have life more abundantly through Him. Regardless of how sinful you have been in the past or are now, you can be forgiven and your slate wiped clean by God. How? By telling God right now that you believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. The moment you put your entire trust in the Lord Jesus Christ you will automatically become born into the family of God forever. The Bible says:

But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31).

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).

Will you believe in Him today? Or will you reject Him? The decision is totally up to you.

To the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ: All matters of spiritual value have been designed by God to be understood through the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

But just as it is written: 'THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.' For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have

received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

The only thing that prevents the Holy Spirit from teaching us is our personal sin(s). King David of the Old Testament clearly put it this way:

If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear;
(Psalms 66:18).

Therefore, if the Lord cannot hear a believer's prayer due to unconfessed sin in his soul, it follows doctrinally that the Holy Spirit will not teach the individual.

Here is the solution:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [sins, known or forgotten] (1 John 1:9).

At this point, you may want to pause and acknowledge directly to God any sin that may hinder you from being fully blessed through the Word of God.

What is God's Ultimate Purpose in Redeeming Mankind?

Another way of posing this question is: What is your purpose in life as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why are you still alive despite your countless failures? If God has a plan for you as His child, do you know what it is all about? Or, do you even care to find out what that plan is? Are you properly using the time that God has given to you each day? Do you ever try to imagine what eternity will look like? Do you ever stop to think about the eternal consequences of failing to fulfill God's plan for your life? What actually did the Apostle Paul mean when he said that a believer who failed to precisely carry out God's plan will be saved, but only as one escaping through flames (1 Corinthians 3:15b)? Indeed, have you taken time to seriously meditate on this verse? Ask yourself if you are spending more time carrying out your own agenda than learning about and following God's agenda.

I strongly believe that we live in a dangerous time of great apostasy. The amount of heresy is unbelievable. Many believers are not interested in learning and applying Bible doctrine on a consistent basis. Rather:

Wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth ... (2 Timothy 4:3b-4).

The question is: Are you among the believers who enjoy having "their ears tickled"? Or are you among those who are seriously interested in learning and applying sound Bible doctrine consistently to the glory of God the Father?

The primary purpose of this work is to challenge you as a believer in the Lord to re-examine your spiritual life in order to determine if your daily thoughts, decisions and actions are in line with the perfect, eternal plan of the Almighty God. Can you passionately declare with Paul,

That I may know Him [Jesus Christ] and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10).

Do you truly want to know God's plan for your life after salvation?

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed,
not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,
work out your salvation with fear and trembling;
for it is God who is at work in you,
both to will and to work for His good pleasure
(Philippians 2:12-13).



Chapter One _____

New Babies In The Family Of God

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word [sound, basic Bible doctrine], so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

God the Father has a great sense of humor. In His marvelous wisdom, He brings His Word to us in a manner that our human mind can comprehend. When God the Holy Spirit directed the apostle Peter to use the word “babies” to describe our new position in God, He had a good reason. Every individual has at least some knowledge about newborn babies. One does not have to be a biologist or an obstetrician (a doctor who cares for newborns) to know that a new baby is totally helpless and relies completely on his parents to have his needs met.

Imagine for a moment a bouncing baby boy playing happily in his crib. Picture the proud father entering the baby’s room with a pair of soccer shoes and a ball. He picks up his son and declares, “Son, I want you to play for the U.S.A. soccer team, and I want you to be the best player that ever set foot on a soccer field!” This loud, enthusiastic speech makes the baby cry. Perplexed by his reaction, the father tries to calm the baby by telling him that it is not proper for him to be making such loud noises in the house. The baby continues to scream. And he continues until his loving mother takes him from his father and feeds him milk.

Does the baby understand a single thing his father said? Of course he does not. What is the baby capable of doing at this time? He is capable of drinking milk—any milk, whether it is pure or contaminated. When he is fed with pure and undiluted milk, the result is healthy growth. However, when he is fed with contaminated milk, the result is unhealthy growth with possibly a fatal outcome.

It does not make sense to start teaching a small child physics, chemistry and genetics before teaching him the basics of the alphabet and the number system. If this logic holds true in the

human realm, then it certainly will hold true in the family of God. For example, some churches fail to see this logic when they appoint new believers to hold positions of authority in their churches. Foreseeing the danger of such a practice, the apostle Paul, through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, issued a very drastic warning:

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do ... and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil (1 Timothy 3:1, 6).

God's Immediate Command After Salvation

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word [sound, basic Bible doctrine], so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

The immediate plan of God after salvation calls for the believer not to start doing so called “great things for God” but to have a strong desire for pure, undiluted spiritual milk (basic Bible doctrine). Why is that? The answer is very simple. In every aspect of life, knowledge must come before service, action or production. No coach can expect his players to work effectively as a team without first teaching them the basics of the game. This is true with God’s plan. Shortcuts will not do. Some believers argue that the more new believers get involved in church activities, the more spiritual they will be. Such an argument has no biblical support! It is humanistic. In essence, these believers who appoint new converts to serve in their local churches are claiming that their formula for Christian growth is better than God’s plan. This is tantamount to not only arrogance but also blasphemy.

At this point in our study, we need to examine 1 Peter 2:2 very carefully. The verse begins by using an analogy of the human newborn. “Like newborn babies ...” The Greek word, *antigennetos*, occurs only once and it is here in the book of Peter. According to the lexical aids (dictionary) to the New Testament it means “just born” and it is figuratively used to mean “new

convert.” Another important Greek word, *brephos*, is also used in this verse and it means “a babe or newborn child.”

This brings us to the following principles when comparing a “newborn baby” and a “new convert.”

Principle 1: A newborn baby and a new convert are totally incapable of providing for themselves.

Principle 2: A newborn baby depends on someone to feed, bathe and change his diapers whenever he is wet or dirty. This is also true of a new convert in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is totally dependent on the pastor and the adult believers to teach him things about God. This new convert is also helpless in the sense that he does not have a spiritual frame of reference from which to discern the truth.

Some believers disagree on whether or not it is solely the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to assist and teach a new convert the Truth, sound Bible doctrine. Such an argument can only be discerned if one understands the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit does not and cannot convert false doctrine into Truth. This means that if a new convert is in a church where false doctrine is taught, then the ministry of the Holy Spirit is limited. Has God the Holy Spirit failed? Of course He has not! Christian pastors are responsible for teaching the Truth to their congregations. The Holy Spirit is totally responsible in helping believers understand Truth when it is accurately communicated.

To this effect, the Bible warns everyone, both new converts and mature believers, to be extremely careful about false doctrine. The apostle Paul warned Timothy to be watchful of false teachers and their doctrines. He wrote:

As I urged you [Timothy] ... so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3).

The apostle Peter puts it this way:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you [believers], who will secretly introduce destructive heresies [false doctrines] ... (2 Peter 2:1a).

It is the responsibility of the believer to have a desire for sound doctrine. Then God is under obligation to lead that person to the Truth. Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7-8).

In light of this invitation by our Lord Himself, the prayer to know God and His Word is one that cannot go unanswered. Why am I so sure that God will answer such a prayer? The Bible is the only reliable source to provide the answer.

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15).

The key phrase here is, “according to His will.” The compelling question is: Does God want us to know Him? Is that His will and eternal plan for the entire human race? Let us look to Scripture for the answer. The apostle Paul clarified this issue when he declared:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge [understanding] of the truth [sound Bible doctrine] (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Therefore, when there is a true hunger for an accurate understanding of the Word of God, God is under obligation to provide it.

Principle 3: The physical growth and well-being of the newborn baby depend on what he is being fed. If he is being fed contaminated milk, the baby will become sick. If this continues, the newborn baby could die as a result of malnutrition. This is the reason why God commands the new convert to crave [have a strong urge for] pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:2).

Principle 4: Newborn babies are incapable of contributing anything to their family or to society in general. The same is true of new converts in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible views these

new believers as potential instruments. When those believers are properly prepared, they will be honorable instruments for God's work. God uses prepared believers to glorify Himself. The apostle Paul had this to say:

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified [set apart], useful to the Master [God], prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

From this verse, it is clear that believers are responsible for the inward renewing of their souls. The believers renew their souls by constant exposure to sound teaching of the Word of God (Romans 12:1-2).

Principle 5: A baby will always behave like a baby until he starts to grow up. This concept applies to the new convert. His prayer, witness and attitude toward God and man will reflect his position as a new convert. God's plan after salvation is that the adult believers make room to accommodate the babies in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul describes this childish *modus vivendi* (Latin for a "way of thinking") and *modus operandi* (Latin for a "way of doing things") in this way:

When I was a child [new convert], I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man [matured], I did away with childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11).

In summary, NO believer can truly know God (as God intends), pray effectively, witness for Christ properly, love God with an immeasurable love, have an impersonal love (*agape* love) for all mankind, and glorify God to the maximum without learning and applying sound Bible doctrine on a consistent basis. This is from God's Word and therefore, there is no room for debate. The importance of Bible doctrine cannot be overemphasized. For example, for a believer to pray effectively, he needs to understand God's will. For him to witness well, he needs to understand the

finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. For the believer to glorify God, he must have a balanced understanding of grace. All these things come from learning and applying sound Bible teaching. Let us pause to review this doctrine in sequence:

- For a believer to serve God well, he must know God, Whom he endeavors to serve.
- To know God, a believer must make himself available to sound teaching of the Word of God.
- For one to make himself available to the teaching of the Word of God, he must have his priorities straight. Bible doctrine must be on the top of his list.
- And for the believer to make Bible doctrine his first priority in life, he must be willing to make a lot of sacrifices. He must be willing to avoid distractions at all cost.

When these four points are in order, knowing, serving, and glorifying God becomes a reality in the believer's life. Knowledge must come before service.

A Craving for Sound Bible Doctrine

God's plan after salvation for the new convert is that he would mature to the point that God can use him to bring glory and honor to Himself. His first command to the new convert was recorded by the apostle Peter.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation (1 Peter 2:2 NIV).

Let us look at this verse in depth.

Newborn babies: The moment an individual hears the gospel and responds to it by "faith alone in Christ alone," there is a new birth in the family of God. This person may be 100 years old at the point of his personal faith in Christ, but he is still considered a newborn baby before God. This believer is given a new life. He is placed into a new family—the family of God.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26).

This believer is transferred permanently from Satan's domain into the eternal kingdom of God (John 5:24). The apostle Paul, referring to our new position in God's kingdom, joyfully said:

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us [permanently] to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:12-13).

Pure spiritual milk: There must be a strong desire or a longing for pure, sound Bible teaching. The fact that the Word of God used the word "pure" should be a clear warning to the believer that impure spiritual milk or false teachings do exist. Some believers have decided it is not important where they worship. This is true in the sense that neither the type of building, nor the geographical location, nor the title of the church should be the deciding factor. However, not all places of "Christian" worship teach sound Bible doctrine. There are a few questions a believer should ask himself before he relaxes comfortably in his current local church. Am I truly learning sound Bible doctrine under my pastor? Am I honestly growing spiritually? Is my pastor really teaching or is he merely "tickling my ears"? In the depth of my soul, am I comfortable here? Am I totally confused about spiritual matters? If the answers are not satisfactory, then the believer alone needs to make a decision whether or not to remain in that congregation. Always remember that when believers truly crave sound Bible teaching, God will provide it. The Psalmist wrote:

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it (Psalm 37:4-5).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find ..." (Matthew 7:7a). Regarding your prayer that is offered in accordance with His plan He said: "Though it tarries [delays], wait for it; for it will certainly come ..." (Habakkuk 2:3b).

In conclusion, it is God's will that the believer should desire to know Him.

Grow Up in Your Salvation

It is God's desire that His children would grow spiritually. The extent to which a believer advances spiritually is parallel to the extent to which he glorifies God. God's plan after salvation is for the believer to grow into maturity whereby he can be fully occupied with the person of Christ and His work on the Cross. Only a mature believer can utter these glorifying words:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain [profit]
(Philippians 1:21).

Through daily study and application of the Word of God, the apostle Paul advanced spiritually to the point that he knew and understood his purpose in life. It is impossible for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to discover the meaning and purpose of his life after salvation without knowledge of God's Word. In fact, only a mature believer can remain focused on Christ and not be moved by the distractions and pleasures of this world.

With regard to a believer's spiritual growth, the apostle Paul wrote:

For this reason also, since the day we [Paul and his fellow workers] heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you [the believers living in Colossae] and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk [live] in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:9-10).

These two verses outline the main reasons why believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are kept alive after salvation. The apostle Paul began his prayer by asking God to fill their souls "with the knowledge of His will [i.e., God's plan after salvation]." He realized, through God the Holy Spirit, that in order to live in a manner that glorifies God, believers needed Bible doctrine in their souls. This conclusion comes from the infallible Word of God.

The Importance of The Word of God

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped [matured] for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).

The law of Your mouth [Bible doctrine] is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces (Psalm 119:72).

I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7).

How can a young man [believer] keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word (Psalm 119:9).

Your word I have treasured in my heart [soul], that I may not sin against You. (Psalm 119:11).

How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103).

From Your precepts [Bible doctrine] I get understanding [knowledge]; therefore I hate every false way (Psalm 119:104).

The law [Bible doctrine] of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip (Psalm 37:31).

“I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart [mind]” (Psalm 40:8).

Our Lord Jesus Christ set a profound precedent for us to follow. Luke of the New Testament wrote:

They [Joseph and Mary] found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions ... And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:46, 52).

The plan of God the Father for His unique Son was that He would function like a true human being and experience hunger and fatigue (Mark 4:37-41), pain (Matthew 27:46) and grief (Luke 19:41). Being fully human, He also needed Bible doctrine in His soul to be able to glorify God, which He did.

The apostle Paul, after being called by the Lord to serve Him, declared his innermost desire:

That I [Paul] may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings ... (Philippians 3:10).

Undoubtedly, Paul's ultimate objective was to know God. Why? The answer is very simple. Knowledge and application must precede production. As discussed previously, this concept is true in every area of life. For example, would a new medical student be allowed to operate on someone's brain? Of course not! Likewise, God would not use a baby believer who knows very little about God's righteousness, grace, love and plan for his life after salvation for an advanced assignment. This does not mean that newborn babies (i.e., new converts) are exempted from telling other believers simply how they have been born into the family of God through "faith alone in Christ alone."

Therefore, for believers to serve, enjoy, and have rapport with God, they must first KNOW WHO HE IS. They must know how He operates and what His principles are. The Psalmist writes:

I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7).

The thinking that believers need to do “great things for God” is humanistic; in fact, new believers do not really know Him.

At this point, the following seven principles have emerged:

Principle 1: Learning Bible doctrine, God’s Word, is equivalent to learning about God.

Principle 2: God can never be separated from His Word. The Bible declares:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

Principle 3: When a believer habitually refuses to attend a church where accurate Bible doctrine is communicated (or to expose himself to sound teaching of the Word of God through literature, audio tapes, video tapes, or DVD’s, etc.) then the believer is actually rejecting God. In other words, a believer who is indifferent to God’s Word is temporarily separated from God. This believer is not separated in the sense that he will go to the Lake of Fire, but he has distanced himself from having a relationship with God.

Principle 4: A believer must have a reservoir of Bible doctrine in his soul to have a true love for God, a relaxed mental attitude, tranquility of soul, contentment, and good rapport with the Heavenly Father.

Principle 5: There is no communication from God apart from His Word (Hebrews 1:1; Revelation 22:18-20). Therefore, the only interaction a believer has with God is through God’s Word in his soul. Since the completion of the written Bible around AD 96, God has not spoken audibly to any man. To give evidence to the finished work of the Bible, the apostle John warned that there would be serious consequences for those who try to add to it (Revelation 22:18). This warning is directed to believers who after the completion of the Bible continue to say, “Thus says the Lord.”

Principle 6: The more Bible doctrine a believer learns and stores in his soul, the more he comes to know God and His plan for his life after salvation.

Principle 7: There are many benefits for the believer who has learned and is continuing to learn sound Bible doctrine, as reflected in the Word of God:

- The more a believer understands the amazing grace of God toward him—an undeserving sinner—the more personal love he has toward God (1 Peter 1:8).
- As an ambassador of Christ, the believer is able to serve on Earth as a true representative of the kingdom of Heaven (2 Corinthians 5:20, 1 Peter 2:9).
- The Word of God helps the believer to know how to pray and what to pray for. Therefore, he can pray in accordance with the will of God (James 4:1-3). The apostle John wrote:

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him (1 John 5:14-15).

- The believer is able to have peace about the future. He realizes through Bible doctrine that his future lies in God's care.
- The level of fellowship a believer has with other people depends on his fellowship with God. When his deepest needs are being met in God, he is able to have healthy relationships with other people.
- The believer has a basis for a standard of right and wrong.
- The believer has a resource (a reservoir of Bible doctrine in his soul) for withstanding spiritual pressure and passing various spiritual tests to the glory of God.
- The believer keeps on experiencing peace and joy. He finds life meaningful and enjoyable when his soul is under the control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Jeremiah joyfully wrote:

Your words [Bible doctrine] were found and I ate [believed] them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart (Jeremiah 15:16a).

Ironically, many believers are not happy today. Their unhappiness can only be explained by the fact that they have little or no Bible doctrine in their souls. Every believer should know that true happiness is not found in success, sex, drugs, abundance of wealth, friendship, marriage, or children, and cannot and will not be found in romance.

- Above all, the believer becomes the object of God’s blessings. Luke puts it this way:

“Blessed are those who hear [learn] the word of God and observe [apply] it” (Luke 11:28).

Therefore, before I close this section of this exposition of the Word of God, it is very important to consider the consequences of a failure to pursue sound Bible teaching after salvation.

Spiritual Baby — Malnutrition

After salvation, God’s plan and purpose for the believer are centered in the spiritual growth of the believer. For this reason the apostle Peter wrote:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18a).

The Scripture provides instruction, and warnings for the new believer:

- God’s provision for the initial stage of the newborn’s spiritual adjustment to His plan is milk [basic doctrine] (1 Peter 2:2).
- Failure to consistently drink this milk [basic Bible doctrine] and eventually progress [mature] to solid food results in malnutrition—literally to become a carnal believer (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).
- Prolonged spiritual malnutrition results in the believer divorcing himself from the plan of God and from spiritual reality altogether (1 Samuel 15; 18:1-11; 23; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).
- A baby believer who is not drinking pure milk [sound doctrine] has a better chance of being exposed to demonic doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1).
- A believer who is not responding to God’s call for spiritual growth has the tendency to become the enemy of the Cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18). This is a sobering fact to consider.

Spiritual Detachment from the World

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you (John 15:18-19).

I [Jesus Christ] have given them Your Word [Bible doctrine]; and the world has hated them, because they [believers] are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You [God] to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one (John 17:14-15).

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17).

Dr. J. Vernon McGee, the author of many Christian books, once said, “You may have lots of wealth, money ... you may dig up the ground and bury them, and you could say, ‘no one will ever take them away from me’. You are probably right, but you know that one day, death will knock on the door and you will be taken away from them.” That’s a remarkable statement!

The truth of the matter is that no one can take a penny along with him when he dies—no matter how hard he tries. This is a fact of life. One day I was watching the national news on the television when suddenly, I saw a strange thing on the screen. A Corvette was being buried with its owner. Apparently, the owner had requested this unique funeral in his will. On one hand, if he was an unbeliever, he truly has made a mockery of himself. On the

other hand, if he was a believer, he demonstrated how little, if any, he understood Bible doctrine.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in one of His doctrinal expositions, made a profound and alarming statement with regard to the things of this world.

‘Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions’ (Luke 12:15).

And He confirmed with a parable to illustrate His message:

“The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ “Then he said, “This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him: ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’” (Luke 12:16-20).

Following this parable, the Lord Jesus Christ issued a solemn warning to all believers:

“So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

This is a severe warning for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and should not be taken lightly.

Self-Examination

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith [i.e., whether your lifestyle is parallel with the Word of God]; *examine yourselves!* Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5).

In reflection of the Lord's previous warning in Luke 12: 21, I see the need to challenge you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have the option to pause now and meditate on the following questions:

Question No 1: As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, are you entirely or even partially attached to this world?

Question No 2: Is there anything in your life that, if taken away, would cause you to lose your spiritual momentum or hope as a believer?

Question No 3: Is there anything that is more important to you than God's plan for your life after salvation?

Question No 4: Are you more preoccupied with the things of this world than you are with heaven and eternity to come?

Question No 5: Are you a good steward of the things that God in His marvelous grace gives to you?

Question No 6: Is your number one priority learning Bible doctrine, applying it, and growing in grace? Does what the apostle Peter says in the following verse apply to you?

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18a).

Question No 7: Does the warning that we previously read in Luke 12:15-21 concern you?

Your answers are a personal matter between you and the Lord. You may wish to pause and meditate. Again and again, the Bible commands believers to spiritually separate themselves from this world. There are at least four major reasons why a believer should detach himself from this world:

- It is a direct command from God.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world (1 John 2:15a).

- Satan is said to be the ruler of this world (John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2). Therefore, the world is not compatible with the Kingdom of God.
- Since this world is Satan's domain, it is impossible for a believer to make his home in two different kingdoms. Our Lord once said:

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13).

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15b).

- It is that simple! The fourth reason is that when we die, we will leave everything behind. The apostle Paul asserted:

But godliness [spiritual lifestyle] actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith [Bible doctrine] and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Handling New Converts with Wisdom

Wisdom is the ability to discern and apply the appropriate knowledge to a given circumstance. Knowledge is acquired from a believer's constant exposure to accurate teaching of the infallible Word of God. Undoubtedly, wisdom cannot exist apart from knowledge. One can have knowledge without possessing wisdom. But no one can have wisdom without having accumulated knowledge. The ability to apply knowledge comes from God.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

God gave Solomon wisdom because he asked for it (1 Kings 3:9). When Solomon applied this wisdom it had quite an impact in his courtroom (1 Kings 3:16-28).

What many believers seem to be lacking is wisdom. An accumulation of Bible doctrine is the first step. The proper application of this Bible doctrine is wisdom.

A baby is a baby. For this very reason, the Word of God commands that mature believers should make room for the spiritual growth of these new babies, or converts, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are to assist, guide, and tolerate them with an attitude of grace.

In as much as it is part God's plan after salvation for every believer to detach himself spiritually from this world, the new converts are not to be yoked (Acts 15:10) or burdened with legalistic rules. Spiritual growth should not be made difficult for new converts, Peter said:

Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10).

Legalism (relying on our own power for "good works") and taboos (man made lists of "don'ts" that rely on tradition rather than truth) are not part of God's plan after salvation for these new converts. In fact they are not meant for any believer. Their spiritual growth will be parallel to the spiritual food that they are receiving. No one grows overnight. Growth is a gradual process. A baby's healthy growth is a result of pure and undiluted spiritual milk of the Word of God and not solid food. Solid food is for adult believers (1 Corinthians 3:2). Therefore, mature believers should allow them room to grow. They should never be subjected to legalism!

Being Preoccupied with the Kingdom of Heaven

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth (Colossians 3:1-2).

Believers are total strangers in this world (Philippians 3:20, John 15:19). The apostle Paul had this to say:

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened ... (2 Corinthians 5:1-4a).

Therefore, we are to stay away from those things that do not glorify God. In fact, until a believer understands that he does not belong here in this world, it will be very difficult for him to submit to God's plan.

In God's plan after salvation, the believer is called to constantly renew his mind or thinking through Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1).

The question is how? The apostle has provided us with the answer:

... by the renewing of your mind [through Bible doctrine] (Romans 12:2b).

The more Bible doctrine a believer learns and applies, the more he advances in the plan of God. The more he advances in the plan of God, the more he is thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). This is the believer's only opportunity to glorify God, which is the only reason why God left the believer behind after his salvation. Only Bible doctrine, through the grace

of God, can prepare the believer to stand strong and immovable when his faith in the Lord is tested like Job in the Old Testament (See *Comfort in Suffering*, by Moses C. Onwubiko).

It is unlikely that a believer will be used to glorify God if he does not have a reservoir of Bible doctrine in his soul from continually learning and applying Bible doctrine. Rather, he will be an object of divine discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19-20). God uses prepared vessels. There is no question about it. Therefore, God will not and cannot use believers to glorify Himself to the maximum until they are ready. God's plan after salvation demands that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ seek sound Bible teaching and grow to spiritual maturity. True change takes place in the soul and only God's Word can make that happen.

Therefore, believers are not to run around doing the so called "great things for God." They are not to participate in Christian activism of any kind. Rather, they are to learn, apply, learn more, and apply more Bible doctrine to their lives. God will use the believers who are growing in grace at the appropriate time. He knows when and how to perfectly use each believer.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware ... if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

Always keep in mind that the ultimate plan of God following salvation is that the believer may glorify Him. The apostle Paul poses this question:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The apostle Paul was trying to get the believers in Corinth to think practically. Worshipping, serving, and glorifying God are the outcome of possessing surpassing knowledge about God. These come as a result of accumulation of sound Bible teaching in

one's soul. Think about the moment when a believer understands, through God's Word, what it cost our Lord Jesus Christ to set aside His glory and be judged by God the Father. Also think about when that believer understands that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit dwell inside of him. He now understands these things and that the King of kings and Lord of lords is preparing a place for him in heaven with a great reward if he serves Him well. He then reaches spiritual maturity and becomes preoccupied with our Lord Jesus Christ. He crosses a line in which his whole perception concerning the things of this life will be radically altered forever. He can truly echo the apostle Paul:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain [profit or advantage] (Philippians 1:21).

To get to this stage in a believer's spiritual life requires a great amount of self-discipline and persistence to expose himself to the pure and undiluted Word of God.

Our forefather, Abraham, crossed this line to maturity. As a result, he earned the title, "friend of God" (James 2:23). The one who wrote Chronicles put it this way:

Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? (2 Chronicles 20:7).

Moses of the Old Testament crossed that line, and in doing so abandoned his right to become Pharaoh of Egypt, probably the greatest Pharaoh in all of Egyptian history (Hebrews 11:24-26).

King David crossed the line, reaching maturity, and he was given the title, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). The apostle Paul was also among the few believers who had a glimpse of the glory of God. Having crossed that line, he said:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things [wealth, being famous, etc.] to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish [excrement] so that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

One should know that spiritual detachment from this world is not a one-time decision. It is not a reaffirmation of faith, which is meaningless. It is not going to a man-made altar and rededicating yourself every Sunday morning. It is not kneeling down and asking God to forgive you and promising Him that you will “never do it again.”

In light of the sinful nature all men inherited from Adam, you probably will do it again and again, unless you have enough Bible doctrine to restrain you—should you choose to apply it. It is not singing “Just As I Am.” God already knows who you are and what you are capable of doing at any given time.

Spiritual detachment from this world is the moment-by-moment decision to maintain fellowship with God and to be restored to that fellowship when it has been broken. Here is the solution for the restoration to fellowship:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins [those we are aware of], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [known sins] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins] (1 John 1:9).

This is God’s ONLY grace provision to assist believers in getting back into fellowship with Him whenever there is a failure in the spiritual life. In addition, spiritual detachment from the world is the result of daily intake of the Word of God and consequently applying it to one’s daily circumstances.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).

Many Bible teachers have a thousand and one interpretations of these verses. The purpose of this work is not to attack anyone, but to present the truth according to the wisdom and grace God has given to me. My goal is not to force my presentation of the Word of God down anyone’s throat; no minister has the right to

do so. My objective is to present the truth and allow the believer the freedom to compare the teaching with the doctrine in his soul. Having said this, let me examine these two famous verses recorded by the apostle Paul.

Romans 12:1 — Your Bodies, A Living Sacrifice

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1).

The apostle begins Romans 12:1 with the Greek word *parakaleo*. This word has many meanings—among which are “to urge,” “to beseech with stronger force,” and “an appeal.”

What we have in this context is similar to an army commander bellowing to his guard unit, “Attention!” This command puts everyone on alert to listen for the orders that will follow. Therefore, the apostle is making a strong appeal—he wants to get the attention of every believer in order to tell them about the plan of God for their lives after salvation.

There are four key parts of Romans 12:1 examined below:

1. *Brethren*: Paul is referring to those who have personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, by calling them “brethren,” he is demonstrating that the Roman believers, to whom he was writing, have equal standing with Jewish believers before God on the basis of God’s justification.

Therefore, having been justified by faith [plus nothing], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

For you are all sons of God through faith [alone] in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ [union with Christ] have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28).

2. *Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*: This is where many legalistic believers have missed the mark. A believer who enjoys smoking puts a cigarette in his mouth. Another believer corrects him by saying, “Do you not know that you are burning the temple of God, brother?” Another person drinks from a glass of wine; someone jumps on him: “Don’t you know that you should present your body as a living and a holy sacrifice?” A believer puts gum in her mouth, another believer jumps in to correct: “A believer isn’t supposed to chew gum....” Some ministers even ask people to come forward to the altar to present their bodies to God. Is this really what it means “to present your bodies a living sacrifice”? No!

To understand what Paul was saying in Romans 12:1, I need to ask one simple question: Was the apostle Paul a legalistic believer? All his epistles show that he is not a man of legalism. What then does “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” actually mean? One thing is very important in this verse: “present YOUR bodies.” The apostle Paul is saying that the believer is totally responsible to present his body as a living and holy sacrifice before God. How does the believer go about this? The believer should endeavor on a regular basis to abstain from willfully committing personal sins. Also, the believer should confess [acknowledge] to God and Him alone any sin as soon as he is aware of it (1 John 1:9). The Psalmist puts it this way:

If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear
(Psalm 66:18).

King David affirmed:

For I know my transgressions [sins], and my sin is always
before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done
what is evil in your sight (Psalm 51:3-4a).

King David added:

I acknowledged [confessed] my sin to You [alone], and
my iniquity [adultery with Bathsheba] I did not hide; I
said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; and
You forgave the guilt of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

John echoed in the New Testament:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [those we know and have confessed] and to cleanse us [make us holy or set our souls apart unto Himself] from all unrighteousness [other sins we have forgotten] (1 John 1:9).

We may forget our sins, but God does not forget them until we acknowledge them to Him. According to 1 John 1:9, until we confess the known sins, both known and unknown sins will not be forgotten by God. At this point, may I pause to add that 1 John 1:9 is the only means of restoration to fellowship with a holy God when sin has been committed. Now looking back to Psalm 66:18, one can easily conclude that if God fails to hear a believer's prayer because of unconfessed sins in his life, then it follows that God would not regard the individual [his body] as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Therefore, 1 John 1:9 is a provision of grace by the merciful God to enable believers to stay in fellowship with Him whenever they fail. It is not a license to willfully commit sin. A believer who thinks otherwise should remember that divine discipline is still applicable (Hebrews 12:5-11). King David's painful experience after his grievous sin, adultery with Bathsheba, which led to his attempt to cover up Bathsheba's pregnancy and his plot to murder her husband, must never be forgotten. The righteousness and the justice of God must be respected. If believers play with fire, they will get burned (Hosea 8:7).

3. *Acceptable to God:* This clearly demonstrates that until believers are in fellowship with God by using 1 John 1:9, they are not an acceptable sacrifice to God. Therefore, in this position of carnality, none of the believer's works or service will be regarded or recorded by God as something worthy of reward for either time or eternity—including prayers, financial contributions for God's work, or helping others in need. The apostle Paul writes:

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones [work done while in fellowship], wood, hay, straw [work done while NOT in fellowship], each

man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

The apostle Paul never explained what he meant by a believer being saved as through fire. One thing is certain: The believer who accumulates wood, hay and straw will suffer great loss without a reward.

4. *Spiritual Service*: This is similar to what has been discussed in the previous paragraph. However, all spiritual work must be accomplished with both the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b) and the Word of God. To serve God well, a believer must have Bible doctrine in his soul. He must approach problems with divine solutions, Bible doctrine. When the individual is in fellowship with God, the Holy Spirit uses the Bible doctrine stored in the believer's soul and produces divine work that is acceptable to holy God, because the work has been accomplished by God the Holy Spirit. God is perfect. Therefore, the only work that will reflect perfection is work done by any member of the Trinity. This explains what Paul meant when he said:

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

The author of Ezra in the Old Testament wrote:

The priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:5).

From this verse, it is clear that God is the One who moves His children to do things that bring honor and glory to Himself. However, we have to give Him the opportunity to fulfill His purpose in and through us. Therefore, endeavoring to be in

fellowship, learning and applying Bible Doctrine should always be the primary goal of everyone who wishes to “present [his body] a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is [his] spiritual service of worship” (Romans 12:1).

Romans 12:2 — Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2).

There are four points in this second verse that will be studied. Keep in mind that the apostle Paul did change his tone slightly in verse 2. He was emphatic when he started the sentence with, “And do not.” It is interesting to note that the apostle John began his letter to believers in the same manner:

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

James also had his own style of declaring the same thing:

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4).

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His prayer said the same thing about the position of believers of this world:

I have given them [believers] Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ‘I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one’ (John 17:14-15).

1. *And do not be conformed to this world:* Being conformed to this world has nothing whatsoever to do with the taboos regarding: The type of car a person drives, the type of clothes he wears and how he dresses, (though it may reflect his thinking), how much wealth the believer has, wearing makeup, and so many other things which some believers have erroneously labeled worldly. The believers who label these things worldly are truly demonstrating that they are totally ignorant of the Word of God and His plan. The Greek word translated “conform” is *suschematizo*. It can also be translated, “being fashioned to.” It has nothing to do with external characteristics. It has everything to do with “inner thought.” There is a reason why I consider being conformed to this world a matter of inner thought. When I explain the next increment you will see why. How does a believer keep his thoughts conformed to God’s plan for his life? This brings my exposition to the next point.

2. *But be transformed by the renewing of your mind:* Every believer has his own mixture of struggles with sin. This mix may include evil thoughts, lies, the tendency to cheat, the desire to enjoy pleasure instead of following God’s will, the urge to become wealthy at any cost, and many other sins all of which are completely incompatible with God’s plan after salvation. The only way a believer can renew his mind is to expose himself to the accurate teaching of the Word of God. The Word of God is a mirror that reflects. When a believer sees this reflection, he now has the option to ask God to help him remove those things from his mind which prevent him from glorifying God. In light of this renewing of the mind, James writes:

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save [deliver] your souls (James 1:21).

3. *That you may prove what the will of God is:* The only way a believer can understand the will of God is through His Word. The more he learns His Word, the more he will discover His will. There are no two ways about it.

4. *That which is good and acceptable and perfect:* God is perfect. Man is imperfect before and after salvation. This means that whatever work he produces apart from God the Holy Spirit is considered unacceptable before God. Therefore, only what God produces in and through man is considered acceptable and glorifying to Him. He will undoubtedly reward such work both in time and eternity. This is one aspect of explaining the marvelous grace of God.

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

Ultimately God wants every believer to be truly preoccupied with the things above. Therefore, a believer's "thought" is the issue after salvation; action is merely a result of thought.

After Salvation, What Next?

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Something very unique took place after the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected and ascended into the presence of His Father in Heaven (Acts 2). Ten days after the Lord ascended into Heaven the Church Age began. You have the right to pause and ask yourself the following questions:

When Jesus Christ was physically present on earth, why did He say:

I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep [maximum protection] them from the evil one (John 17:15).

Why has God made a decision to leave us on Earth after our salvation? After all, the Bible made it clear that we are God's property:

Do you not know that ... you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20b).

The Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—indwells every person who personally puts his trust entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why does the Bible never say that God made His home inside the bodies of the great believers of the Old Testament like Moses? Why did God decide to live inside the body of every believer in Christ Jesus today?

Do you not know that you [believer in Christ] are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

What is the value of my spiritual progress? When Paul, the greatest apostle of human history, wrote a letter to his beloved church in Philippi he gave them a command:

So then, my beloved [believers] ... work out your salvation
... (Philippians 2:12).

That command applies to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today. It tell us the main reason why believers are left on Earth after their salvation. God's plan after salvation is for the believer to bring glory to His name. The following prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ now makes sense:

“Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.” ... “I do not ask You to take them [believers] out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one” (John 17:1b, 15).

It is alarming how many false teachings have sprung up from the command “Work out your salvation.” To get to the true meaning of this important phrase, let us take a closer look. The Greek word erroneously translated “salvation” in Philippians 2:12, is *soteria*. This Greek word has several meanings. It means salvation, but it also means, “to save, preservation, deliverance,” as well as “salvation.” How do the Bible translators determine which word to use in Philippians 2:12? The task is indeed a serious one, as mistranslated Scripture can cause confusion among believers and give room for false teaching. The best way to translate any word in the Bible should be to not only examine the context and the author's other writings, but also to examine the Bible as a whole. A translator has to determine if the use of a particular word will contradict other verses or cause ambiguity in other areas where the same word was used. Unfortunately in this case, the Greek word *soteria* was translated “salvation,” but should have been translated “deliverance.” The verse should have been written: “So then, my beloved ... work out your deliverance ...” (Philippians 2:12). This is why it is so important for every believer to expose himself to the sound teaching of the Word of God.

A student of the Bible may read Philippians 2:12 and think that it contradicts many other verses such as:

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (2 Timothy 1:9).

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [in action] (Titus 3:5a).

For by grace you have been saved [saved in the past and remain saved forever] through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of *works*, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

But if it [salvation] is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of *works* (Romans 11:6a).

To further illustrate that the apostle Paul was writing to believers, he began his letter by saying:

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you (Philippians 1:1-3).

So, if the apostle Paul didn't mean for the believers to work out their salvation from Hell, what did he mean?

Salvation: Past, Present, Future

To further explain Philippians 2:12, I will discuss the three phases of a believer's journey.

Phase 1: *Past action.* The moment a person puts his undivided trust in Christ, God the Father saves him. At this point his salvation from the Lake of Fire is complete. He is saved forever. The prophet Isaiah records:

But My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not wane (Isaiah 51:6b).

Our Lord declared:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word [gospel message], and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed [completed action] out of death into life (John 5:24).

The apostle Paul added:

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us [past action] to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For he rescued [Greek: *rhuomai* - to draw or pull out of danger] us from the dominion of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians. 1:12-14).

When an unbeliever hears the gospel message and recognizes that Jesus Christ is truly the Savior of mankind, and believes in Him, God the Father gives him His perfect righteousness:

This righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. There is no difference, (Romans 3:22 NIV).

This grace gift of God's perfect righteousness becomes the basis for everything that God does for the believer for both now and into all eternity. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- ***Forgiveness of sin:***

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He [God] removed our transgressions [sins] from us (Psalm 103:12).

Blessed is he [every believer] whose transgression [sin] is forgiven, whose sins are covered (Psalm 32:1 NIV).

- ***Justification of the believer:***

Therefore, having been justified [perfect tense—justified now with the result that we keep on being justified] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

- ***Cancellation of future judgment:***

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5:24).

- ***Assignment of God's own life—eternal life:***

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life (John 3:36a NIV).

- ***Eternal security of the believer:***

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand (John 10:28 NIV).

Finally, 1 Peter 1:5 states that the believer is shielded [kept] by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Phase 2: *Present ongoing action:* This is the believers daily spiritual production and glorification of God. This is the phase the apostle Paul is referring to in Philippians 2:12. He encourages the believers in Philippi to continue in their spiritual production that he commended them for in Chapter 1. He reminds them that they are responsible for their daily deliverance from personal sins and their consequences.

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Rome:

For if you [a believer] live [habitually] according to the sinful nature, you will die [the sin unto death], but if by the Spirit you put to death [bring under control] the misdeeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

This caution given by Paul is similar to that given by James:

Therefore, get rid of all filth [sins] and evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word [Bible doctrine] which can save [deliver] you [from death] (James 1:21 NIV).

And the author of the book of Proverbs gave the same warning:

The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked [carnal believer] are cut short (Proverbs 10:27).

Phase 3: *Future action:* This is the final removal or separation of believers in Christ from the world—the conclusion of the unique age of the church. This conclusion will begin with the rapture, the exit resurrection of the church. The apostle Paul, in his anticipation of this wonderful event wrote:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

This is my longing, and I believe it is yours also:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and the mortal with [will have put on] immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:52-57).

This should be our total confidence for the future as the believer lives and serves in Phase Two of his spiritual journey.

Believers Have Been Sworn in to Serve

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity

with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21).

I have often pondered over what the apostle Paul said to the Corinthian believers:

If any man's work is burned up [useless service], he [the loser believer] will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Whatever this experience might be, the Word of God is totally silent about it. The only thing God, the gracious One did, was to warn us of the awkward experience awaiting those believers who disregarded His unique plan. The apostle Paul puts it this way:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

This verse is directed to the evolutionists and heathen at large, but there is also application for the believer. He can see that God the Father has done everything possible for us.

- He sent His Son, the Unique and beloved One, to the Cross to be judged as a substitute for us, at absolutely no cost on our part.
- He graciously imputed (assigned) His righteousness to us at the point of our personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22).
- He gave us His Holy Spirit, to teach, to guide, and to guarantee that our salvation is a completed task (John 16:13; Ephesians 1:13-14).
- He gave us a completed canon of Scripture—the Bible.
- He distributed gifts of communication to male believers. Some He called to be pastors and others evangelists (Ephesians 4:11).
- The Holy Spirit gave every single believer at least one spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
- He provided every believer—male and female—equal access to His throne (Hebrews 4:16).

To further demonstrate to us that our age is unique, he made all Church Age believers priests in His kingdom.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

In the Old Testament the Levitical priesthood retained the exclusive privilege of representing others before God as priests. For one to serve as a priest he had to be a male without any birth defect, and must be from the tribe of Levi. But today, in the Church Age, every believer, male and female, has the awesome privilege of being a priest, representing himself or herself directly before God.

And has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:6).

God also did something even more unique, appointing every believer to represent the Heavenly Kingdom.

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Office of Ambassadorship

In America today, there are many ambassadors from all over the world. There is an ambassador from Israel, Great Britain, Russia, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa and many other countries. The question one may want to ask is, what do these ambassadors have in common? To answer this question, I first need to ask: What is an ambassador?

By examining the word, “ambassador” from the original languages of the Bible—Hebrew and Greek—we see the true meaning. In the book of Isaiah, chapter 18:2, there is a Hebrew word, *malak*. This word means, “a priest, a messenger, a prophet, a teacher, a king,” or an “ambassador.” In the Old Testament, this word is often used for men of HIGH RANK as in 2 Kings 18:17: “The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief

officer and his field commander with a large army.” In Greek the word “ambassador” is *presbeuo*. This word is also found in 2 Corinthians:

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as through God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

It means to be a SENIOR which, by implication, means to act as a representative. On the other hand, Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the word ambassador this way: “an official of highest rank sent to represent his government in a foreign country.”

Back to the original question. What do all these ambassadors from various countries have in common?

- They are men of high rank.
- These ambassadors have been sent by their governments. No one can represent his country as an ambassador unless he has been sent by his government.
- They are the spokespersons for their countries.
- They are the link between the country in which they reside and their own countries.
- Their logistical support comes from the government of their native country.

Now that I have answered the question, I want to apply the overview of this protocol to the Word of God. The Bible calls every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, “an ambassador.” Why? The answer is very simple: The resurrected Christ is no longer physically present on earth. This is what the apostle Paul wrote about Him:

Which He [God] brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and made Him [His humanity] sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1:20-21).

These two verses are in reference to the finished ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on Earth. When He completed His task which was His substitutionary spiritual death on the Cross, He was taken

up to the third heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, a place of honor and glory (Acts 2:24, Hebrews 1:3). Believers no longer see the humanity of Christ:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ... AND THOUGH YOU HAVE NOT SEEN HIM [JESUS CHRIST], you love Him, and THOUGH YOU DO NOT SEE HIM NOW, but you believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory (1 Peter 1:3, 8).

This verse makes it clear that even when Peter was writing this letter, believers no longer saw the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God, seeing that He has no representative on earth after the ascension of His Son, Jesus Christ, swore every believer into service in the HIGHEST RANKING OFFICE that the Trinity can offer to anyone. The apostle Paul wrote:

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20a).

To this commission, all believers in Christ Jesus—male and female —have the following in common:

1. They are citizens of the heavenly Kingdom:

For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).

With this in mind, every believer should recognize that he is a total stranger to this world. He should readjust his thinking to the plan of God after salvation with the knowledge that his citizenship is in Heaven.

2. They have the highest rank that Heaven can provide.

3. All believers in Christ are commissioned to be ambassadors by God Himself (2 Corinthians 5:20a).
4. The believer is God's spokesperson on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20b). The question is, do believers today speak on behalf of God?
5. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are under the maximum security that Heaven can offer. The apostle Peter writes:

Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5).

6. All their needs are provided by God Himself (Philippians 4:19; James 1:17). Concerning the needs of all believers, the apostle Paul has this to say:

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

The Lord Jesus Christ said :

THEREFORE GO [through personal witnessing and evangelism] and make disciples [students] of all the nations ... teaching them to observe [apply] everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19a, 20a).

This command, often called “the great commission,” is one of the main reasons believers are left on earth after salvation, and one of the ways we bring honor and glory to God.

As an ambassador you need to ask yourself these questions:

- As a believer, am I obeying this command?
- As an ambassador, do I witness for Christ?
- Do I support those on the mission field?

The Office of Priesthood

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

Besides being sworn in as Christ's ambassador, God in His marvelous grace introduced us to a new line of priesthood, a "royal priesthood." What is God's purpose in making us a kingdom of priests? The Word of God will provide us with the only sufficient answer. From the isolated island of Patmos, where the apostle John was banished because of his faith in Christ, he wrote:

To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests TO HIS GOD and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:5b, 6).

Therefore, God's plan after salvation is that believers would serve Him as priests. This service includes the following:

- To represent one's nation or those in authority before God in prayer:

I urge that entreaties [requests] and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The question is, do you pray for your nation and those in authority?

- To pray for the unbelievers, that they may have the opportunity to hear the Gospel:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4a).

- To pray for those in the mission field including me—Evangelist Moses C. Onwubiko.

Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak (Colossians 4:3-4).

- To pray for pastors who have abandoned everything to serve our Lord? This is part of God's plan after salvation that you pray for them on a regular basis.
- To pray for other believers as the Lord may direct you. More importantly that they may:

Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18a).

- To represent oneself before God—to make petition for one's personal needs.
- To pass on the doctrine that one has learned, to others.

Eagerly Awaiting the Glorious Day

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11-14).

The moment a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is born into the family of God. God's requirement for that newborn baby is spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18).

The spiritual growth of a newborn baby cannot take place apart from "pure and undiluted milk," which is sound Bible teaching. Sound Bible doctrine, if, and when it is found by the hungry baby-believer, becomes the basis for developing what I call, "spiritual bones." When the baby graduates from the milk [basic doctrine], he advances to another level of Bible doctrine. By his continued desire to take in Bible doctrine on a consistent basis, he will eventually face his first test as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If he applies the doctrine he has learned to the experience, he will pass the test to God's glory. The believer who continues on the right path, taking in God's word, advancing to spiritual maturity, and anticipating spiritual testing, will one day cross the line from spiritual adolescence to reach spiritual maturity. When he does, he will undoubtedly get a glimpse of the glory of God that Abraham, Moses, King David, the apostle Paul and other believers saw.

The apostle Paul faced many trials; he was beaten, whipped and stoned. He nearly drowned and was maliciously ridiculed and ripped apart by both unbelievers and believers. What kept him going during all these adversities? How did he endure? The answer is simple: Paul's glimpse of the glory of God was exceedingly

greater than the constant afflictions which he encountered while on earth.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).

Even while he was chained and imprisoned, he sang melodious songs to God instead of whining and complaining.

Today, many believers are so miserable simply because of lack of spiritual growth. Christianity, a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus, is awesome. The Word of God is sweeter than honey (Psalm 119:103). Until believers discover this, they are going to continue to sleep on a bed of misery. And this is exactly what Satan wants for the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has a perfect plan for each believer. This plan is hidden inside His Word. It will not miraculously fall out of the sky. Believers have to discover this plan by daily study and application of Bible doctrine.

Now let us pause and reflect on the teachings so far. Notice that the phrases, “Bible doctrine,” “God’s Word” or “Bible teaching” have been used over and over again. This repetition holds the very thread that can sew the believer’s life together in the devil’s world. Study and apply, study and apply, study and apply. The importance of God’s Word can never be over emphasized.

What Does God Think About Wealth?

There is nothing wrong with a believer having wealth. Abraham was wealthy. Moses of the Old Testament had this to record about Abraham:

Abraham was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold (Genesis 13:2).

People like Job, King David, King Solomon and many others who served the Lord were richly blessed with wealth by God Himself. Concerning God’s blessing to Job, the author of the book of Job writes:

The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys (Job 42:12).

However, when a believer's wealth becomes more important than God's plan for his life, then his wealth has become an IDOL before God. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can examine himself on this issue of wealth with this simple question: Do I honestly view the things of this world like the apostle Paul did when he wrote:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things [including wealth] to be loss [no longer important] in view of the surpassing value [what is important] of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish [excrement] so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:7-9).

For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. (1 Timothy 6:7-8).

A Glance at Contentment

Many people have erroneous ideas about what brings contentment. They think that being very successful in life will bring contentment. Some of these individuals have truly become successful and yet none of them seem to be content. Just look around you. Some of the multi-millionaires who are professional athletes had probably dreamed in their teens about becoming millionaires one day. Today, many of them have realized their dreams. The question then is: have they become content? No, they have not. Every season, these financially wealthy athletes want more money. Some refuse to sign new contracts unless they have a couple million more dollars. On the other hand, some

have said, “The only reason we are not content is because we are single.” Many of them have married and discovered otherwise. Some have said, “If we can move into a larger house with a big walk-in closet, many rooms, bigger bathrooms, large acres of yard, big garage, swimming pool, and cars of our dreams, we will definitely be content.” These dreams have come true for some. Are they content with those things? Still the answer is no.

If believers paid closer attention to the successes, failures, experiments, catastrophes and blessings that came to the Biblical figures, we would learn certain lessons about contentment.

There was a man in the Bible who had everything. God, in His grace, had blessed him abundantly. He was blessed in every sense of the word. Women—he had them by the hundreds. Silver and gold—he had those things in abundance. This man had experimented with women, money, and many other things. He searched intensely for contentment in everything he could think of, but to no avail. This man was Solomon. In the end, Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, concluded:

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity! (Ecclesiastes 1:2b)

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

The apostle Paul had his own experience with lack of contentment. Finally he discovered that contentment is hidden in God. And to find it, one must know God, and for one to know God, one must learn God’s Word. Once Paul realized this, he centered his entire life around the truth of God’s word. Paul expressed this when he said:

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned [through Bible doctrine] the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need (Philippians 4:12).

This was a testimony of the apostle Paul, a man whose life after his salvation was meaningful to our great God. Therefore, a believer can conclude that contentment does not depend on wealth, money, success, marriage, promotion or becoming famous. Contentment can only be discovered and experienced through learning sound Bible doctrine and applying it to situations. Therefore, as a believer lives his daily life, it is important for him to remember to:

- Use wisdom, grace and discernment:

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of every opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person (Colossians 4:5-6).

- Remain focused on whatever he does for God and keep on meditating on the apostle Paul's words:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

- Continue to learn Bible doctrine while listening to these words:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped [matured] for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- Face difficulties and challenges of this life knowing that:

Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4b).

- Remember His words of encouragement when life looks difficult and confusing.

Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10).

- Listen to Him as He tells you from His infallible Word:

‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you (Hebrews 13:5b).

- Fix his mind on Him, meditate on His Word:

The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3).

- Serve our Great God by listening as the Lord Jesus Christ speaks:

‘And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ (Matthew 28:20b).



Dear Heavenly Father: My prayer is for every reader to fully appropriate the tremendous spiritual wealth and privileges You have bestowed upon them. May You encourage them to continue to study the unadulterated truth of the Bible so that they may be transformed by the renewing of their mind. That they will continue to study and apply Your Word until they cross the line and reach spiritual maturity.

Father, I pray that every one takes refuge in their Heavenly citizenship and extends hope, love and truth to others as Your ambassador. That they encourage the believer and evangelize the unbeliever; that they utilize their priesthood, come to you in prayer, remembering not only themselves but the needs of others. That they will continue to focus on the things of Heaven and find the contentment only You can provide. That the perfect peace that only comes from trusting God will be theirs. I lift this prayer in the name of the One who loves us, the King of kings, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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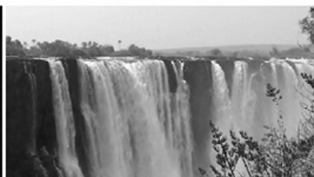
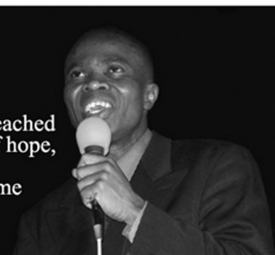
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"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37b - 38

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

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"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

BELOVED OF GOD, Greetings from your missionary partners here at Grace Evangelistic Ministries! We make the apostle Paul's words our own: *[We] thank [our] God in all [our] remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in [our] every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For [we are] confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:3-6). **"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, [We] will say rejoice!"** (Philippians 4:4).

What a challenge the Philippian Christians are to us even today! There's no question in my mind that if there was such a thing as a perfect church in the apostolic era, the Philippian church would certainly have qualified for that distinction. When the apostle Paul contemplated his missionary work, he addressed them as his "joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1). They loved the apostle Paul dearly. They made sure that the same truth that had enriched their own lives was available to others. Of these, the apostle testified,

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

They understood the need to reach out to others. Beloved, on the same note I unapologetically express to you my profound gratitude. You have stood with us to ensure that the gospel of grace, that has brought salvation to you, reaches others. Testimonies are pouring in from around the world. God alone is using us and materials from this ministry, *Riding the Death Train* (our gospel pamphlet) and other publications, to bring many into His Kingdom. We are pleased to share some of these testimonies with those in our e-mail café. You can receive these reports, and also our road reports. Simply request that we include

you on our e-mail café by e-mailing us at news@GEMworldwide.org

We greatly rejoice in what the Lord is accomplishing through you and G.E.M. as we take the good news to those in bondage, one person, one family, and one nation at a time. Many are embracing sound Bible teaching. We close our letter to you, by sharing this e-mail from the President of a Biblical Institute in Congo:

"True. I have been trying to meditate and find words good enough to express my appreciation for the ministry. But I failed. However, I want to say A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR MINISTRY AMONG us here in Bukavu (Congo). In fact, you would not realize how much we have been blessed and brought back to the real foundation of Christianity. The church needs such teaching in order to face the actual situation. This is what I would call revival—going back to the Bible. Apart from teaching and your material at the Bukavu Bible Institute, we are arranging to hold a seminar down the country...to pass on what we have received from God through your ministry.... Grace to you all." Rev. Malanda

Please stand with us in prayer!
Every blessing to you!

McDonnell

Moses C. Onwubiko & GEM Team

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