



## THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED MAMMON

By William Tyndale - Printed in 1527 - Edited by [Todd Sumrall](#) 2024

Updated English and Scripture Verses.

### Table of Contents

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED MAMMON .....	1
PREFACE .....	2

<b>CHAPTER 1: TYNDALE’S INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: FAITH AND GOOD WORKS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF ETERNAL REWARD .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING MAMMON AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: ASSURANCE THROUGH ENDURANCE AND GOOD WORKS .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7: RIGHTEOUSNESS BEYOND THE PHARISEES .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8: TRUE TREASURE IS STORED IN HEAVEN .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9: THE HEART’S LONGING AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10: RECEIVING A PROPHET’S REWARD .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>CHAPTER 11: THE COMMAND TO KEEP THE LAW .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>CHAPTER 12: PRAYER AND FASTING BY FAITH .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>CHAPTER 13: THE INHERITANCE OF THE KINGDOM .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>CHAPTER 14: LOVE AS THE FRUIT OF FORGIVENESS .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>CHAPTER 15: MISINTERPRETATIONS OF PARABLES .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>CHAPTER 16: GOD CHOOSES FIRST, GRACE REVEALED .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>CHAPTER 17: UNDERSTANDING GOOD WORKS .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>CHAPTER 18: TRUST IN GOD, NOT IN THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>CHAPTER 19: THE HEART OF MERCY AND TRUE CHRISTIAN ALMSGIVING .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>CHAPTER 20: THE DANGER OF OUTWARD PIETY WITHOUT THE WORD OF GOD .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>CHAPTER 21: THE SPIRIT OF GOD: THE ROOT OF LOVE, FAITH, AND TRUE GOOD WORKS .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CHAPTER 22: REWARDS AS EVIDENCE, NOT EARNED WAGES .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>CHAPTER 23: BLESSED IN ACTION: THE SOURCE AND ROLE OF GOOD DEEDS .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>CHAPTER 24: FAITH, OBEDIENCE, AND THE LAW OF FREEDOM .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>CHAPTER 25: THE HEART AND THE LAW OF FREEDOM .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>CHAPTER 26: THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN TRUE FAITH AND INTELLECTUAL BELIEF .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>ABOUT THE EDITOR: A JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION .....</b>	<b>130</b>

## **PREFACE**

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### **My Prayer for the Reader**

If I were to **describe this work** of William Tyndale in one statement, I would say that **it is full of the glory of God**.

This work of Tyndale's has been an answer to a prayer I have been praying for over a year. I have been asking God to reveal our relationship with grace, works, and the law.

I have also been asking Him to show me the **“good works in Christ Jesus”** that He has prepared for me to do before the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 2:10**).

It is my prayer that God will use this book to open the eyes of the reader so that they may **behold wondrous things out of His law** (**Psalms 119:18**).

And may He enlarge our hearts so we **can run in the ways of His commandments** (**Psalms 119:32**).

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## **Introduction to William Tyndale**

William Tyndale (A.D. 1494–1536) was an English scholar, translator, and Protestant reformer best known for translating the New Testament and part of the Old Testament into English, making it accessible to ordinary people for the first time. Born in Gloucestershire, he studied at Oxford and Cambridge, becoming proficient in Hebrew and Greek.

Tyndale's translations of the Old and New Testaments defied the Catholic Church's prohibition against unauthorized translations, leaving a lasting impact on the English language and greatly influencing the later King James Bible.

After fleeing England to escape persecution, he continued his translation work in Germany and the Low Countries, evading capture

for years. Betrayed in 1536, Tyndale was arrested and burned at the stake for heresy because he made the Scriptures available in English.

While burning, he famously prayed that God would **“open the King of England’s eyes”**—a prayer later answered when King James I commissioned the King James Bible.

Tyndale’s work remains foundational to both religious reform and English literature.

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### **About This Edition**

This work by Tyndale was originally written in Middle English, which can be challenging to understand today. My motivation for updating this text into modern English is to make it more accessible and meaningful to readers.

In *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, Tyndale frequently combined or referenced scriptures without quoting them directly, often mentioning only the book and chapter. Because I prefer scripture references to be prominent, I have included the full scripture text within the body of the work wherever I discerned Tyndale was referencing a passage. This approach is intended to aid the reader by clarifying Tyndale’s thoughts alongside the scriptures and enabling them, like the Bereans, to verify whether what is said aligns with the truth.

Most of the scripture passages included are from the New King James Version (NKJV), replacing those originally provided by Tyndale. Occasionally, I incorporated passages from the Tyndale Bible (TYN),

which are marked in parentheses or brackets either inline or below the relevant chapter. In one instance, I used a passage from Brenton's Septuagint (LXX) to illustrate why Tyndale may have interpreted the scripture as he did. Alternate words within passages are noted in parentheses. On rare occasions, I included passages from translations other than the NKJV and indicated them accordingly in parentheses.

Tyndale left no footnotes, but I have added brief in-line comments in *[brackets]* or just below the relevant paragraph to clarify the text. This approach avoids disrupting the reader's flow by requiring them to reference footnotes.

To preserve Tyndale's original meaning, I relied primarily on the original context, supplemented by historical resources, dictionaries, and ChatGPT to interpret terms. Where uncertainty remained regarding his exact intention, I retained his words verbatim.

I also used ChatGPT to refine the text into proper modern English, improving grammar, punctuation, and flow while preserving the tone and intent of the original. Additionally, ChatGPT was instrumental in formatting this work.

Tyndale's original work did not include chapter divisions or titles. All chapters, subdivisions, and titles in this edition are my additions.

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## **Note to the Reader**

As this is my first attempt at such a project, I realize there may be errors, though I hope they are few and insignificant. The message of

this text is powerful and life-giving, and my hope is that this modernized version brings Tyndale's insights to a wider audience.

As Tyndale himself wrote in his introduction:

**"If God's word affirms it, and you feel in your heart that it is true, take comfort and offer thanks to God. If God's word condemns it, then consider it accursed, as you would any other doctrine, as Paul instructs his Galatians. Do not believe every spirit immediately, but rather test them against the word of God, which is the ultimate measure of all teaching and endures forever. Amen."**

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## **Recommendations for Further Study**

I am nearly persuaded that, second only to the apostle Paul, William Tyndale had the greatest influence in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles through his translation of most of the Bible into English in the Tyndale Bible, which later influenced the language and style of the King James Bible.

For more on William Tyndale's life and work, I recommend:

- [Tyndale by David Teems, available on Amazon.](#)

If you would like a copy of *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* in the version I used for this rewrite, it can be found in various formats for free download at [Internet Archive](#). Note that the version at Internet Archive does not include Tyndale's introduction. To access it, you'll likely need to [purchase the book or Kindle edition](#).

**Note:** These Amazon links are affiliate links, and I will receive a small commission from your purchase. If this does not sit well with you, feel free to go directly to Amazon and search for these titles.

May this updated version of *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* bring glory to God and strengthen the faith of God's chosen and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness (**Titus 1:1**).

In our Lord Jesus Christ,

Todd Sumrall

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## **CHAPTER 1: TYNDALE'S INTRODUCTION**

### **To the Reader:**

Grace and peace, along with every spiritual insight and living expression worthy of Christ's kindness, be with you, the reader, and all who thirst for God's will. Amen.

The reason I place my name on this small treatise, rather than in the New Testament, is rooted in Christ's counsel to perform good deeds in secret (**Matthew 6:1**), being satisfied with the knowledge that God sees all.

I intended to remain anonymous, trusting in the reward Christ has prepared for us on the last day. However, circumstances now compel me to reveal myself.

While I served faithfully, a companion embarked on a journey to proclaim Christ where His name had never been heard. May God, who stirred his heart, also guide, comfort, and bless his mission.



During this time, a man named William Roye, skilled in cunning, approached me for assistance after exhausting his funds. Initially, he proved manageable, but with the addition of funds, he reverted to his true nature.

I endured his ways until our project was completed. As I needed a partner to write and help compare texts, his assistance was essential. After we finished, I bid him farewell, and he quickly sought new allies—an art he perfected. He soon traveled to Argentina, boasting of his capabilities and achievements.

A year later, a man named Jerome, a brother from Greenwich, visited Worms on his way to Argentina. He expressed a sincere desire to follow Christ, living in self-reliance rather than depending on others' labor. I cautioned him about Roye's boldness and advised patience and meekness, which he promised to uphold.

However, Jerome soon fell under Roye's influence, crafting rhymes while Roye translated a Latin dialogue to English, claiming grand intentions he may never fulfill. Paul advises that:

**"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient," (2 Timothy 2:24, NKJV).**

Rather than battling with contentious rhymes, we are called to use God's Word as our weapon, for it alone can destroy sin and vice.

Do not let the faults of others discourage you from truth. Judas's actions do not taint Christ's disciples. Good and evil will always coexist, revealing each other by contrast.

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## **On Antichrist**

Most importantly, understand that Antichrist is not solely a single figure who appears with miracles as some imagine. Antichrist is a spiritual adversary, teaching false doctrines and opposing Christ. He was present in the Old Testament, the time of Christ, and through the apostles' era, as John and Paul attest. He remains today and will persist until the end. Yet, once exposed by the Word of God, he shifts his appearance and tactics, only to reemerge in new forms.

Christ rebukes the scribes and Pharisees, identifying them as true Antichrists:

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense (show) make long prayers” (Matthew 23:14);**

**“You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men” (Matthew 23:13);**

**“For you have taken away the key of knowledge” (Luke 11:52).**

Similarly, today's church leaders act with the same hypocrisy, disguised in titles and attire, sowing the same deception. When exposed, Antichrist will only adapt, once again presenting himself as an:

**“Angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).**

I urge you to read and contemplate this teaching. Just as the Jews awaited Christ but missed His arrival, we too have sought Antichrist, unaware of his rule among us due to misdirected expectations. Had we searched in the teachings of Christ and the apostles, we would have recognized him long ago. Now that he is pursued, he hides in new forms of deceit, ever elusive.

Although Antichrist's excommunications have been revealed, he has made acquaintance with Christ treasonous, even for kings. The ancient Antichrists brought Christ to Pilate, claiming:

**"We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die" (John 19:7).**

Today's zealots mask their intentions under pious motives, but their aim is to sever us from Christ, binding us instead to manmade doctrines.

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### **A Word of Encouragement**

Some may ask why I write this if they intend to burn it, as they did the New Testament. My answer is simple: they burned it as expected, and they will do the same to me if it is God's will.

I completed my duty in translating the New Testament, and I do so here again. I invite any reader to compare this to Scripture. If it aligns with God's Word and resonates with you as truth, take comfort and thank God. If it is found false, consider it accursed, as you would any other doctrine, as Paul instructs his Galatians:

**"Do not believe every spirit immediately, but rather test them against the word of God, which is the ultimate measure of all teaching and endures forever. Amen."**

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## CHAPTER 2: FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

### The Parable of the Wicked Mammon in Luke

*"There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'*

*"Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'*

*"So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'*

*"So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.*

*"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? (Luke 16:1-13, NKJV)*

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## **The Danger of Misusing God's Word**

In light of this and many similar texts, numerous individuals, through the misuse of the law, have led countless people away from the true faith and from placing their trust in the promises of God. They have prevented many from trusting in the merits, qualities, and virtues of Christ, our Lord. Consequently, they have fulfilled the Scriptures, as Christ warns:

**“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:11–12).**

Additionally, Paul states:

**“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).**

These deceivers have taught people to place their trust in their own merits, misleading them into believing they will be justified before God by their good works. They have distorted the pure word of God to align with their Aristotelian philosophies.

While philosophers and worldly-wise individuals are among the greatest enemies of the gospel, the wisdom of the world cannot comprehend the wisdom of God, as illustrated in **1 Corinthians 1:18–31** and **2:1–16**.

Additionally, worldly righteousness cannot attain the righteousness of God. Despite this, they cling to Aristotle's teachings as if they were the ultimate truth. To sustain this deception, they misinterpret and manipulate Scripture, violating its meaning because they fail to comprehend it. They do not consider the context—what comes

before and after—and overlook countless other verses that could provide a fuller understanding.

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## **Clarifying the Gospel**

For these reasons, I have taken it upon myself to clearly explain the gospel and certain passages in the New Testament. To the best of my ability, and by the grace of God, I aim to bring the Scriptures to their rightful understanding and to clear away the misconceptions sown by these deceivers, like the Philistines who obstructed the wells of Abraham. I aim to dig again the wells of Abraham and purge them of worldly wisdom.

**“May God grant me this grace, for the love of His Son, Jesus our Lord, and to the glory of His name. Amen.”**

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## **Faith Alone in Christ**

Faith in Christ alone—independent of our own merits or works—brings justification and grants us peace with God. The Apostle Paul supports this in Romans:

**“I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16),**

referring to the good news and promises that God has made and sworn under oath to us through Christ.

Paul continues:

**“The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).**

Through faith in Christ and God’s promises, we find mercy, life, favor, and peace. In contrast, the law brings forth death, damnation, and wrath, along with the curse and vengeance of God upon us. Paul refers to the law as the **ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9)**.

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### **The Role of Faith and the Spirit**

Faith grants us pardon and forgiveness, freely purchased through Christ’s blood. It also brings the Holy Spirit into our lives. The Spirit breaks the chains of the devil and grants us true freedom. Paul emphasizes:

**“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (freedom)” (2 Corinthians 3:17).**

The Spirit empowers us to love God’s will and feel sorrow for not loving Him enough. While our physical bodies may lack the power to fully obey God’s law, the Spirit enables our hearts to align with it.

Paul advises in **Ephesians 6:10-18** that every individual should equip themselves with the armor of God. He emphasizes the importance of taking up the **shield of faith**, which protects against the fiery darts of the wicked and enables us to withstand trials and temptations, particularly during life’s most difficult moments.

Hold God's promises in your heart and believe in them unwaveringly. When temptation arises, and the devil uses the law and your actions against you, respond to him with God's promises.

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## **Justification by Faith Alone**

Faith alone brings justification and the forgiveness of sins. Paul affirms this repeatedly in his letters:

- **"Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).**
- **"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).**
- **"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1).**

Paul emphasizes that justification comes through hearing and believing, not through works. He wrote:

**"Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?... just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons (children) of Abraham." (Galatians 3:2, 6-7)**

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## **The Good Tree Produces Good Fruit**

Consider Christ's comparison:



**“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matthew 7:17).**

The tree must be good before it can produce good fruit. Similarly, a person must first be made good—through faith in Christ—before they can do good works. This inner goodness, freely given by God, reconciles us to Him and frees us from the bondage of sin.

The word of God, alive and true, offers His favor in Christ to all who repent and believe. Peter confirms this:

**“God... purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9).**

Through faith, God’s Spirit makes our hearts alive, pure, righteous, and true, enabling us to love and serve Him.

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## **The Inability of the Law**

The law, which reveals sin, cannot justify or save. As Paul states:

**“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).**

**“The law brings about wrath” (Romans 4:15).**

The law cannot heal or restore; it only exposes our desperate need for God’s grace.

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## **Faith Reveals Our Inner Resistance**

When a mother gives her child even a simple command, like rocking a cradle, the child might resent it; this command simply reveals the hidden resistance in the child's heart and causes tension with the mother, leading the child to feel unloved.

Similarly, the commandments, like:

**"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17)**

do not give me the power to follow them. Instead, they expose the wrong desires within me and condemn me because I can't fully obey them. They reveal that God is angry with me, as His will and mine are in such opposition.

That's why Paul says:

**"For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21).**

But instead, Scripture declares:

**"But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22).**

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## The Power of Promises, Faith, and Christ Our Redeemer

The promises, when truly believed, are what justify us. They bring the Spirit, who opens our hearts, gives us the desire to follow the law, and assures us of God's goodwill toward us. If we submit ourselves to God and ask Him to heal us [*from our sin sickness*], He will respond. In the meantime, because our hearts consent to His law, He will regard us as whole, no longer despising us but instead showing us compassion, caring for us tenderly, and loving us as He loves Christ Himself.

Christ is our Redeemer, Savior, peace, atonement, and satisfaction. He has made amends to God for all the sins of those who repent—those who agree with the law and believe the promises—regarding the sins they have committed or will commit. Even if we stumble a thousand times in a single day, if we genuinely repent, we will always find mercy waiting for us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

---

### True Faith: Gift from God

True faith, however, isn't born of human imagination or effort—it's a pure gift from God, freely poured into us through Christ, without any action or merit, or even seeking for it on our part. As Paul says:

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).**

It is God's grace alone, and God's grace is a gift from Him.

This faith is powerful, full of virtue, constantly working within, and transforms a person entirely. It renews them, reshaping their nature

and changing their desires. Through this faith, one finds their heart is changed—it now has the power to love what it once hated, find joy in what once repulsed them, and to hate what they once loved.

Faith brings freedom to the soul, making it free to follow God's will, just as health restores strength to someone weakened by a long illness. When sick, a person can't even stand, can't taste properly, and may crave unhealthy things. But when health returns, they find the strength and desire to do what they couldn't before.

In the same way, true faith empowers the soul, setting it free so the whole person can live as it was meant to live.

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### **The Spirit's Role in Faith**

The Spirit of God comes with faith and brings light, allowing a person to see themselves as they are under God's law—recognizing their own miserable bondage and captivity, humbling themselves, and feeling disgust for their sins.

The Spirit also brings the promises of God, of all good things, found in Christ. God works through His Word, and when it is preached, faith takes root in the hearts of those chosen by God.

As faith grows and the Word of God is believed, God's power releases the heart from sin's captivity and bondage, binding it to God and His will. This transforms a person completely, giving them new desires and strength to love and do what was once impossible. They are changed from the inside out, now drawn naturally to what they once

hated and repelled by what they once loved. This person is clean and opposed to the way they used to live.

---

## **Faith Produces Good Works**

This deep connection to God's will leads to a life that produces good works—not from human invention but from following God's commands.

Just as you don't need to command a tree to bear fruit, there is no law imposed on someone who believes and is justified by faith, as Paul mentions in his first letter to Timothy:

**“The law is not made for a righteous person.” (1 Timothy 1:9)**

It is unnecessary because the law of God is inscribed in their heart, and they find joy in it. Just as we naturally eat, drink, and move without instruction, a believer, by nature, produces good works without needing to be forced by the law.

Like a healthy person waiting only for food when they're hungry or water when they're thirsty, believers constantly thirst for God's will. When the opportunity arises, they carry it out naturally. This hunger and thirst to follow God's will is a blessing for all who trust in Christ's blood.

---

## **The Misunderstanding of Faith**

On the other hand, someone without true faith may talk about faith and works but doesn't understand what they mean. They are just a babblers. They don't understand or experience the Spirit's work within and interpret the Scriptures—those that speak of faith and works—based on their blind reasoning and foolish imagination.

Such a person lacks the true feeling and understanding of faith in their heart. They repeat ideas without personal experience, like someone retelling another's story without knowing if it's true or having any direct experience or understanding of it.

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## **Faith and Good Works Belong to God Alone**

The Scriptures attribute both faith and good works not to us, but solely to God, to whom they rightfully belong. They are His gifts and the result of His Spirit's work in us.

Isn't it misguided and willfully ignorant to assert that a person is completely powerless, while simultaneously arrogantly assuming the ultimate responsibility of God by believing that they can create faith through their own efforts and imagination?

So, we must let go of relying on ourselves and instead ask God, as Christ's apostles did:

**“Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5).**

When we have true faith, we need nothing more, for faith brings the Spirit. The Spirit not only teaches us but also empowers us, guiding us

through hardships, persecution, death, and even hell—all the way to heaven and eternal life.

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## CHAPTER 3: FAITH AND GOOD WORKS

What, then, do we make of the Scriptures that emphasize good works, such as:

**“I was hungry and you gave Me food” (Matthew 25:35),**

along with other passages suggesting that we are justified and accepted by God through our good deeds?

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### **Here is My Response:**

Many people, when they first hear or read about faith, readily agree and form a certain notion of what it means. It's similar to hearing a story about something that happened far away, which doesn't directly affect us. While we believe it and may repeat it as truth, this belief or opinion is often what they consider **"faith."**

They assume faith is within their own control, much like other natural actions they perform through effort or work. However, they don't experience the work of the Spirit or recognize the serious sentence of the law, God's fearful judgments, or the terrible damnations of being under Satan's control.

Once they feel a mere opinion in their hearts—something like, **“This doctrine seems true; I believe it”**—they think this constitutes genuine faith. But later, when they notice no real change in themselves or see that their actions remain the same, they conclude that faith alone is insufficient for justification.

They come to believe that something greater than faith is required to truly justify a person.

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### **Misunderstanding Faith**

Many people fall away from true faith and argue:

**"Faith alone does not justify a person or make them acceptable to God."**

When asked why, they respond:

**"Look at how many people believe but don't live any differently."**

These are like the **“dreamers”** Jude describes in his letter, deceiving themselves with their own delusions. Their so-called faith is merely a fantasy of their imagination, lacking God's grace.

In the end, they're worse off than before, like old wineskins that burst when filled with new wine. They hear God's word, but they can't hold onto it, and it leaves them worse than they started.

---



## **Good Works as Evidence of Faith**

Pay close attention, as we now address this topic. The Scriptures, in response to false beliefs and imagined faith, speak of good works not to imply that they make a person acceptable to God or justify them, but to highlight the difference between genuine faith and mere pretenses. True faith naturally leads to good works. If good works don't follow, then the faith is no doubt just a delusion or a false belief.

Just as the fruit doesn't make a tree good but rather shows that the tree is good as Christ says:

**"For a tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33),**

in the same way, true faith is known by its actions.

Take, for example, Mary, who anointed Jesus' feet. When Simon, who invited Jesus to his home, judged her harshly, Jesus defended her and explained with a story:

**"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41-41).**

Simon answered:

**"I suppose the one whom he forgave more" (Luke 7:43).**

Jesus confirmed this and pointed out that while Simon offered him no water, kiss, nor anointing for His head, Mary had washed His feet

with tears, kissed them, and anointed them with costly oil. Jesus concluded:

**“Her many sins are forgiven, for she has shown great love. But those forgiven little, love little” (Luke 7:36-50).**

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## **The Relationship Between Faith, Love, and Works**

We recognize that our actions and deeds are merely outward manifestations of the inner grace and abundant mercy of God, given freely and without any merit on our part, even before we perform any deeds.

Christ teaches us to understand genuine faith and love through our actions. Our deeds are the fruits of love and love itself stems from faith. The greatness of love, as well as our deeds, depends on the strength of our faith:

- **Where faith is strong and robust, love is passionate, and actions are plentiful and performed with great humility.**
- **Conversely, where faith is weak, love is lukewarm, and actions are infrequent—much like flowers that bloom in the winter.**

Simon believed in Christ, but his faith was weak. Because his faith was small, his love was cool, and his actions reflected that. He invited Christ to a simple, bare meal and didn't welcome Him with much kindness. Mary, on the other hand, had a strong faith, which led to a burning love and significant deeds done with deep humility.

She saw herself clearly in the light of the law, fully understanding the danger she was in, the bondage of her sins, her dreadful fate, and

God's fearful judgment on sinners. At the same time, she heard the gospel preached—the promises of Christ—and saw, like an eagle, the overwhelming mercy of God that surpasses all words. She saw this mercy in Christ, given for all humble sinners who acknowledge their sins.

Mary believed God's word powerfully and glorified Him for His mercy and truth.

Overcome by the kindness of God, which knows no bounds, can never be rightly described with words, and cannot even be fully comprehended, Mary's heart burned with love.

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### **Love as the Overflow of Faith**

Mary's love grew so intense that she couldn't contain it, and her love had to have an outlet. She was so "drunk" with love that nothing mattered to her except expressing it openly. She didn't care about herself, even though she was known as a great sinner. She wasn't concerned with the judgmental attitudes of the Pharisees, who despised sinners.

She didn't even think about the cost of her precious ointment. Instead, she humbly ran to Jesus' feet, washing them with her tears, drying them with her hair, and anointing them with the costly ointment. She would have—if it meant she could show her love to Him—even descended into hell, if it were possible.

Paul felt a similar love when he was overwhelmed by the abundant mercy of God, expressing a desire to be separated from Christ if it could mean saving the Jewish people, as he says:

**“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites” (Romans 9:3-4).**

As a person experiences God within themselves, so they act toward their neighbor.

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### **Cause and Effect: The Role of Good Works**

We are often so limited in our understanding that we reason backward, starting with the effect and working toward the cause. For example, we see the moon darken, then we investigate why and discover that it's because the earth has moved between the sun and moon, blocking the light. We conclude that the moon is dark because the earth is in the way. But the darkness of the moon isn't what causes the earth to be in between; rather, it's the earth's position that causes the moon to be dark.

In the same way, when we read:

**“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much” (Luke 7:47)**

we shouldn't think that her love is what caused her sins to be forgiven. Instead, her forgiveness was the cause, and her great love was the effect.

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## **Good Works as Evidence of Grace**

Good works reflect love. Love itself reveals that one has received some form of kindness or blessing. Without that, love would not exist. Why does one person do good works while another person doesn't? Or why does one do more than another?

**The answer lies in how deeply a person feels the incredible love of God in their heart.**

Why does one person love while another doesn't, or one loves more than another? Because one person feels the incredible love of God in their heart, while the other does not, or feels it to a lesser extent.

Scripture often speaks in straightforward, simple terms, so it's important to avoid getting lost in complicated theories. Many knowledgeable individuals have erred due to misleading reasoning.

This shows there is a big difference between simply having righteousness and goodness in one's heart and showing it outwardly. Faith alone makes a person saved, good, righteous, a friend of God—even a child and heir of God and all His blessings.

**Faith brings us the Spirit of God, and our actions reveal that faith and goodness.**

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## **Sharing Faith Through Good Works**

Scripture often speaks in the way people naturally do. For example, when a father tells his child, **“Go and show kindness to this poor person,”** he doesn't mean the child is to become kind at that moment, but rather to demonstrate the kindness already present

within them through a loving act, so it can benefit someone else in need.

**Similarly, we should interpret Scripture that speaks of works as a call for us to show the goodness we have received through faith,** letting it benefit others and exposing false faith where it exists. God gives grace to be used for good, not to be hidden. He wants us to share it, expand it, and use outward actions to draw others to Him.

As Christ says:

**“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16)**

If we hide our faith, it’s like burying a treasure or keeping wisdom to ourselves, where it helps no one.

By doing good works, God’s kindness and gifts in us become evident not only to others but to ourselves. We gain assurance that our faith is genuine, that we have the true Spirit of God in us, and that we are chosen for eternal life, freed from Satan’s power. As Peter urges in his second letter:

**“Make every effort to confirm your calling and election, for if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:3-11).**

**Good works confirm our calling and election.**

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## **Certainty of Faith through Works**

How can anyone presume that their faith is real, that God's favor is with them, and that His Spirit is in them if they don't feel any movement of the Spirit or any inclination to godly actions?

You can only be certain of your faith through your works. If good works don't follow, and if they aren't done out of love without seeking reward, you can be sure that your faith is only an illusion—a dead faith, as James calls it:

**“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17).**

Such faith does not justify or save.

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## **Abraham's Example of Genuine Faith**

Abraham became certain that his faith was genuine and that he truly feared God when he was willing to offer his son. As scripture says:

**“Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Genesis 22:12).**

**“Now I know that you fear God,”** meaning it is now clear that Abraham reveres God because he did not withhold even his only son out of obedience to Him.

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## **Good Works as Evidence of Inner Righteousness**

Hold firmly to this: a person is righteous and good in their heart, and before God, solely through faith, before any works. Yet outwardly, before others and even to themselves, a person's righteousness is shown through their works. Through these outward deeds, they gain assurance that they are a true believer, in God's favor, and righteous and good by His mercy.

You could call this outward righteousness a visible sign of the inner righteousness of the heart. But understand that this outward righteousness is simply the result—a way of showing the inner righteousness—and doesn't make a person righteous before God. Rather, they must first be righteous before Him in their heart.

**Just as the fruit of a tree is the outward sign of the tree's inner goodness, so our works reveal the righteousness within.**

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## **Faith Without Works Is Dead**

This is what James means in his letter when he says:

**"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).**

In other words, if good works don't follow, it's a clear and certain sign that there's no real faith in the heart—just a dead illusion or false idea that people wrongly call faith.

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## **“Make Friends for Yourselves with Unrighteous Wealth”**

In the same way, we should understand Christ’s saying:

**“Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:9).**

This means to show your faith that is in your heart openly by sharing and giving your resources to the poor, so you gain friends—those who, on the day of judgment, will testify to your good works.

Their testimony will reveal your faith and who you truly were in your heart before God, as shown openly through your good works. For on that terrifying day, everything will bring comfort and consolation to the true believers, while for the unbelieving, everything will bring despair and shame. Each person will be judged openly before everyone according to their deeds and actions.

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## **Works as Evidence of True Faith**

So, it is rightly said that these witnesses will be your friends—they will testify that you lived as a true Christian, following Christ’s example of mercy, as any person does who feels God’s mercy in their own heart. By these works, faith is shown to be real and complete, for outward actions alone cannot please God or make friends unless they come from faith.

Christ Himself rejects the Pharisees’ works—even their prophesying, miracles, and casting out demons, which we might consider great virtues. But their works do not make friends, because their hearts are false and impure, their intentions double-minded.

**Without faith, no heart is true, and no intention is pure.**

So, we must admit that works do not make a person righteous or good; the heart must first be righteous and good before any truly good work can come from it.

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### **Good Works Must Be Done Freely**

Secondly, all good works must be done freely, with a single, pure intention, expecting nothing in return. Christ commands this when He says:

**“Freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8).**

Just as Christ, through all His works, didn’t earn heaven (since it was already His), but instead served us through them—not seeking His own gain but only our benefit and the honor of God the Father—so must we.

In all our deeds, we should not seek our own profit—whether in this life or the next—but should work freely to honor God and seek only the good of others, serving them selflessly.

This is what Paul means when he says:

**"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation (set that aside, meaning He hid it), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5–8).**

Though He was fully God and had all the fullness of the divine, in all His works He sought our benefit and became our servant.

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## **Faith Freely Grants What Cannot Be Earned**

The reason is this: since faith justifies us, removes sin in God's eyes, brings life and health, grants us God's favor, makes us His heirs, pours the Spirit of God into our souls, and fills us with every blessing in Christ, it would be a shame—even an offense against faith and the blood of Christ—if someone tried to earn what faith has already given, what God has freely provided.

It would be as if Christ Himself had dishonored His own identity by trying to earn His place as God's Son and heir, which He already was.

Faith makes us children of God:

**“He gave the right (power) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).**

And as Paul says:

**“And if (we are) children, then (we are) heirs” (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7).**

So how, or why, should we try to earn an inheritance that is already ours through faith?

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## **CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF ETERNAL REWARD**

What should we say, then, about the scriptures that suggest people should perform good deeds and live well for the sake of obtaining heaven or eternal reward? For instance, there are verses like:

**“Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:9),**

**“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20), and**

**“If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments”  
(Matthew 19:17),**

among others.

### **Addressing Misunderstandings of Faith and Rewards**

Here is my answer: those who do not truly understand or feel the essence of faith may discuss and think about rewards in the same way they consider good works. They likely believe that one must earn heaven through their good deeds, treating the kingdom of Christ like worldly affairs, where merits are required. They believe that a person should only do good in expectation of a reward.

However, such thoughts are mere fantasy and delusions. This is what Malachi refers to when he says:

**“Who is it among you that shutteth a door for my pleasure, for nought?” (Malachi 1:10, Tyndale’s version).**

In other words, these individuals seek personal gain or advantage, like hirelings and day laborers who receive their rewards here on earth, just as the Pharisees do with their prayers and fasting.

*[The verse quoted above for Malachi appears to be Tyndale’s own interpretation of that verse. I was not able to find anything similar in the various versions of the Bible I have that use the Masoretic Text. However, the Septuagint does have a very close rendering of that verse in the way Tyndale uses it. This is from Brenton’s LXX: “Because even **among you the doors shall be shut, and one will not kindle the fire of mine altar for nothing**” (Malachi 1:10).]*

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## **Eternal Life Follows Faith, Not Effort**

This is also how it is with heaven, eternal life, and everlasting reward. Just as good works naturally follow from true faith (as mentioned above), so that you don't need to command a true believer to act or force him with any law—for it's impossible for him not to work; he's simply waiting for the opportunity and is always ready to act, needing only a reminder, which also reveals false faith from true—in the same way, eternal life naturally follows faith and good living without being sought after.

It's inevitable, even if no one thought about it. Yet, it's mentioned and promised in scripture to show the difference between a false believer and a true one, so that everyone can understand what flows naturally from a good life, without needing to strive for it.

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## **A Simple Example: Consequences Follow Actions**

Here's a simple example: Hell—eternal death—is the outcome warned of for sinners, yet it follows sin naturally without anyone needing to pursue it. No one does wrong hoping to be damned; they'd rather avoid it. Yet one naturally follows the other, and even if no one warned them, a sinner would eventually find and feel it. It's warned about so people understand what results from a life of evil.

Likewise, just as bad consequences follow evil actions without seeking them, good results follow a righteous life naturally, even if unplanned or unnoticed—just like when you drink wine, whether

good or bad, the taste naturally follows, even if that's not the reason you drink.

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## **Faith, Grace, and Our Inheritance**

Scripture also teaches that, by nature, we inherit damnation; before birth, we are like vessels of God's wrath, filled with a corruption that naturally leads to sin. Our actions, reflected in the mirror of God's law, reveal this sinfulness; they expose us, kill our consciences, and confirm that we are, by nature, destined for judgment.

If we belonged to God, we would cleave to Him and desire His will. But our actions, measured against the law, reveal otherwise, showing us what we are and what our end will be.

So, we see that eternal life and every good thing are promised through faith alone. Believing in Christ saves us, for His blood purchased life for us and made us heirs of God. If you try to earn heaven through your own merits, you disrespect Christ's sacrifice, making it seem unnecessary.

But a true believer is an heir of God through Christ's merits, chosen for eternal life before the world began (**Ephesians 1:4–5**). When we hear the gospel and trust in God's mercy, we receive the Spirit as a pledge of eternal life (**Ephesians 1:13–14**) and begin experiencing its sweetness in our hearts now.

Overcome by the kindness of God and of Christ, we love His will and work willingly—not to earn what is already freely given and of which we are already heirs.

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## **The Meaning of Christ's Words**

When Christ says:

**“Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:9) and**

**“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19-20),**

the meaning is clear: you are called to do good. By doing so, you will naturally gain friends and treasures in heaven and receive a reward, without needing to chase it or worry over it.

Focus on living rightly, with a pure intent, without concern for any reward, and be content. You know that every promise of God follows a life of good living, naturally. Your good works are simply a sign that the Spirit of God is within you, whom you have received as a guarantee of God's truth.

This affirms that you are an heir to God's goodness—all of it already secured by Christ's blood, laid up in store for the day when each person will receive according to their deeds, as those deeds reveal who they truly are.

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## **Sincerity in Good Works**

Those who fix their eyes on the reward, however, are reluctant, deceitful workers who love the reward more than the work itself; they even resent the labor, and deep down, they resent God who commands it.

But the one who works purely out of love, expecting no reward, works sincerely.

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### **Who Welcomes Us into Heaven?**

Furthermore, it is God alone who welcomes us into eternal dwellings, not the saints, and this needs no defense. How could the saints receive us into heaven when each person depends on God alone to be received?

Every person scarcely has enough for themselves, as shown by the five wise virgins who would not share their oil with the foolish ones (**Matthew 25:1-13**). As Peter says in his first letter:

**“The righteous one is scarcely saved” (1 Peter 4:18).**

So Christ’s words about **“making friends”** who may welcome you into eternal dwellings are not about the saints in heaven but about the poor and needy among us here on earth.

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### **The True Meaning of “Make Friends”**

It is as if He’s saying: Why do you build churches and establish monasteries or chapels to honor the saints who are already dead, thinking this will make them your friends? They don’t need it, and they are not your friends—rather, they were the friends of those who lived in their own time and helped them.

Your friends are the poor who live with you now, your neighbors who are in need. Make friends with them by using your worldly wealth so



they may testify to your faith and so you may see clearly that your faith is genuine, not false.

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## **Good Works and Assurance of Faith**

To the second point: the idea of being welcomed into eternal homes doesn't mean that those we help here on earth will be the ones to bring us there. Many whom we show mercy to and do good for will not make it to heaven; it doesn't matter, as long as we fulfill our duty with humility and love.

In fact, it's a mark of strong faith and love to do good even to those who do wrong, aiming to lead them to Christ if possible. The poor give us a chance to practice our faith, and by doing good, we feel our faith in action, assuring ourselves that we have been translated from death unto life, freed from Satan's captivity, and brought into the freedom of God's children.

On that day, our deeds will be evidence of our faith in Christ, who has promised that **none who believe in Him will be put to shame (Romans 10:11)**.

Thus, good works help strengthen our faith, assure our consciences, and make us aware of God's mercy. Yet heaven, eternal life, joy, faith, God's favor, His Spirit, and the strength to do His will are all given freely, through the abundant and plentiful riches of God, obtained through Christ, not through any merit of our own.

For that reason, all praise should be directed to the Lord alone.

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## CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING MAMMON AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD

To understand this further, consider three questions:

1. What is mammon?
2. Why is it called unrighteous?
3. And how does Christ tell us to imitate the dishonest steward who served his own interests at his master's expense, which is surely sinful?

### 1. What is Mammon?

*"Mammon"* is a Hebrew word meaning wealth or worldly goods, especially excess wealth beyond basic needs, which can be shared without harm to oneself. The Hebrew word **hamon** means abundance or multitude, from which comes **mahamon** or **mammon**, signifying riches.

### 2. Why is it Called "Unrighteous Mammon"?

It's called **"unrighteous mammon"** not because it's always gained unjustly or through usury; ill-gotten gains cannot be used for good works and must instead be returned. As written in Isaiah:

**"I, the Lord... I hate robbery for burnt offering" (Isaiah 61:8),**

and:

**"Honor the LORD with your possessions" (Proverbs 3:9).**

Rather, wealth is called **"unrighteous"** because it is often used unrighteously. Paul, writes:

**"the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16)—**

not because God made them so, but because evil men misuse them.

In the same way, riches are called **“evil”** because they are often misused by evil people, leading to sin, temptation, and the harm of souls. Where there’s wealth, as the saying goes, **“Money gets what it wants,”** leading to fighting, stealing, deceit, flattery, and countless wrongs against one’s neighbor—all in the pursuit of riches.

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### **3. The "Unrighteous Steward": An Example of Wisdom**

Many have puzzled over who or what the **“unrighteous steward”** represents, as Christ seems to praise him. The answer, simply put, is that Christ does not commend the steward for his unrighteousness but for his wisdom.

Christ highlights the steward’s shrewdness in securing his future, not his dishonest actions. It’s similar to saying:

**“If thieves can stay awake all night to rob and steal, can you not stay awake to pray or study?”**

This doesn’t praise the thief’s actions but acknowledges his determination, which could be applied to righteous pursuits. Or, if I say:

**“Vain women adorn themselves with gold and silk to attract their lovers; can you not adorn your soul with faith to please Christ?”**

I am not praising whoredom but highlighting the dedication, albeit misdirected.

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## A Biblical Parallel: Adam and Christ

In the same way, Paul compares Adam and Christ, calling Adam a **“figure”** of Christ. Although Adam represents sin and Christ grace—total opposites—the comparison lies in the pattern of inheritance.

Just as Adam is the source of sin, Christ is the source of righteousness; as all sinners descend from Adam, so all who are righteous come from Christ.

**“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous”  
(Romans 5:19).**

## Applying the Example

Here, the unrighteous steward serves as an example for us, not in his dishonesty but in his foresight and determination. Just as he wisely prepared for his future through unrighteous means, we should be just as diligent in caring for our souls through righteous means.

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## The Unrighteousness of Withholding Aid

Most importantly, before God, riches are called **“unrighteous mammon”** when they aren’t used to meet our neighbor’s needs. If my neighbor is in need and I refuse to share what I have with him, I am withholding from him what is rightfully his.

This is because the natural law binds me to help him, as stated:

**“Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them”  
(Matthew 7:12).**

Christ also taught:

**“Give to him who asks you” (Matthew 5:42),**

and John says in his first epistle:

**“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).**

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### **A Spiritual Failure Often Overlooked**

Yet few recognize this as unrighteousness because it's a spiritual failure. People are often deceived in the handling of goods they've acquired honestly and justly, thinking there's no wrong in keeping them because they weren't gained through theft, robbery, oppression, or usury, nor are they being used to harm anyone.

*[usury is the practice of lending money at extremely high interest rates, which are often considered exploitative or unfair]*

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### **Misinterpreting Scripture About Rewards**

In the same way, you can interpret other scriptures that may sound as though our relationship with God operates like worldly transactions, where the reward is valued more than the labor itself.

This is where people despise the work, acting with insincerity—going through the motions with their bodies but not with their hearts—and only as long as they are observed, so their actions appear genuine outwardly.

When Christ says:

**“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:11-12),**

you must not think that our deeds earn the joy and glory that will be given to us. As Paul says:

**“If by grace, then it is no longer of works” (Romans 11:6).**

It cannot be received both by God’s grace and as a reward for our deeds.

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### **Faith, Grace, and Good Works**

Instead, believe as the Gospel—the good news and promises of God—tells you: through Christ’s blood alone, by faith, God is reconciled with you, you are received into His mercy, and you have become a child of God, an heir together with Christ of all God’s goodness, with the Spirit of God poured into our hearts as a pledge of these promises.

Our deeds bear witness to this, confirming to our consciences that our faith is genuine and that the true Spirit of God is within us.

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## CHAPTER 6: ASSURANCE THROUGH ENDURANCE AND GOOD WORKS

For if I patiently endure adversity and hardship for God's sake—that is, because I know God and bear witness to the truth—then I am assured that God has chosen me in Christ and, for Christ's sake, has given me His Spirit as a guarantee of His promises, which I feel working in my heart, with my deeds bearing witness to this.

It is only Christ's blood that merits all the promises of God. What I endure and do serves partly to heal and mortify the sinful nature I was born with, so that I may become fully like Christ, and partly to fulfill my duty to my neighbor, to whom I owe all that I have received from God.

I endure all things, even to the point of shedding my blood if necessary, not as a sacrifice or merit for his sins, but as an example to draw him to Christ.

**It is Christ's blood alone that takes away all sin—past, present, and future—for those who are chosen and repent, believing the Gospel; that is, God's promises in Christ.**

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### Good Works as Evidence of Sonship

Also in the same fifth chapter:

**“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44-45).**

It's not that our works make us children of God; rather, they testify to and assure our consciences that we are indeed God's children—that God has chosen us, washed us in Christ's blood, and filled us with His Spirit.

As it says:

**“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:46-48).**

In other words, if you do nothing beyond what the world does—nothing more than those who are driven by the spirit of the world—how can you know that you are God's children, truly loved by Him, any more than the world is? But if you sincerely follow God in doing good, then it is surely a sign that the Spirit of God is within you and that God's favor, absent from the world, is upon you. This shows you are heirs of all God's promises and chosen to share in the fellowship of Christ's blood.

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## **Doing Good in Secret**

**“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in**



**secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Matthew 6:1-4).**

This reminds us of our duty and shows what follows from good works—not that works earn it, but that a reward is stored up for us, to which we are appointed through Christ’s blood, and our works bear witness to this.

For if we are worldly-minded and perform our works as the world does, how can we know that God has chosen us out of the world? But if we act freely, without any worldly motives, to show mercy, to fulfill our duty to our neighbor, and to be to others as God is to us, then we can be certain that God’s favor and mercy are upon us and that we will enjoy all the good promises of God through Christ, who has made us heirs of them.

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### **Sincere Prayer and Fasting**

Also, in the same chapter it continues:

**“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:5-6, BSB).**

Likewise, Christ teaches in the same passage that when we fast, we should not make it obvious to others, but rather do it in a way that is not obvious:

**“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (Matthew 6:16).**

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## **Good Works as Fruits of Faith**

These verses simply explain what follows good works: for eternal life does not come as a result of our works but is, as Paul writes,

**“The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23)**

Our works do not make us righteous, for unless we were already justified by faith—which is our righteousness—and had the Spirit of God within us, we could not do any good work freely, without some motive of personal gain, either in this life or in the next. Nor could we find spiritual joy in times of suffering and self-denial.

Good works are called the ***“fruits of the Spirit”*** in **Galatians 5:22-23**, for it is the Spirit who works them within us. They are also sometimes called ***“fruits of righteousness,”*** as in **2 Corinthians 9:10**, because they flow from righteousness.

Before all works, therefore, we must have righteousness within our hearts—the source of all good works.

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## CHAPTER 7: RIGHTEOUSNESS BEYOND THE PHARISEES

The righteousness of the scribes, the Pharisees, and those led by the spirit of this world is merely an outward show of good deeds. But Christ says to us:

**"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).**

In the world's eyes, it is righteous if a person refrains from killing. But a Christian understands righteousness as loving one's enemy, even while enduring persecution, torment, or the agony of death. He grieves more over his adversary's blindness than over his own suffering and prays that God would open his enemy's eyes and forgive his sins—just as Stephen did in **Acts 7**, and as Christ did in **Luke 23**.

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### Examining Oneself by God's Law

A Christian examines himself by God's law and casts off all claims to righteousness. For the law accepts no merits, no accomplishments, no personal righteousness, nor any person justified in God's sight. The law is spiritual and demands that the heart and commandments be fulfilled with the same love and obedience that was in Christ.

If anyone could fulfill all of God's will with such love and obedience, then he might dare to sell pardons on his merits—but not otherwise. For those reasons, when a Christian views himself in the law, he discards all claims to righteousness, accomplishments, and merits, and humbly and sincerely acknowledges:

- His sin and wretchedness,
- His captivity and wretchedness,
- His fault and guilt.

And thus, he is blessed as one **“poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3)**.

He mourns in his heart because he is bound in such a way that he cannot fulfill God’s will, and he hungers and thirsts for righteousness—that is, the righteousness that flows from Christ’s blood to give him strength to do God’s will.

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### **Turning to God’s Promises**

He turns to God’s promises and earnestly prays that God, in His great mercy and faithfulness, and for the blood of His Son, will fulfill His promises and grant him strength. In this way, his spirit continually prays within him.

He also fasts—not just one day a week or for Lent but keeps a heart of continual self-restraint to tame the flesh and subdue the body to the spirit until he grows strong in the Spirit and matures into the full righteousness found in Christ.

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### **Righteousness Now and Yet to Come**

And because this fullness will not come until his body is put to death, a Christian remains a sinner according to the law, and so he fasts and prays in the spirit, unseen by the world. Yet through God’s promises, he is always righteous by faith in Christ, sure that he is an heir to all of God’s promises.

The Spirit, which he has received as a guarantee, testifies to this, as do his heart and actions.

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### **The Profound Mystery the World Does Not Understand**

Take note: to see that God's law is so spiritual that no human can fully keep it; to mourn over this, to desire, yes, to hunger and thirst for strength to do God's will sincerely from the heart; and—despite the devil's tricks, the weakness of the flesh, and the world's judgment—to hold fast to God's promises and believe that for the sake of Christ's blood you are accepted as an heir of eternal life—this is a profound mystery, one the world does not understand.

But whoever experiences this, though he falls a thousand times in a day, will yet rise again a thousand times, assured that God's mercy is upon him.

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### **Forgiving Others as Assurance of Forgiveness**

**“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” (Matthew 6:14).**

If I forgive, then God will forgive me—not because of my actions, but because of His promises, His mercy, His truth, and the blood of His Son, Christ our Lord. My forgiving others assures my spirit that God will forgive me, yes, that He has already forgiven me.

For if I agree with God's will in my heart—even if, due to weakness, I can't always follow it perfectly, and even if I can't do God's will and meet law's requirements as purely as required—if I recognize my

failings and humbly confess my sin, grieving in my heart because I can't fulfill God's will, and if I long for strength, then I am certain that the Spirit of God is within me and that His favor is upon me.

For the world has no desire to do God's will and does not grieve that it cannot, though it may feel sorrow at times out of fear of repercussions.

However, anyone who is led by the spirit of this world cannot forgive without the other person making amends, offering something in return, or providing some advantage.

**So why do I forgive now? Because I feel God's mercy within me.**

As a person feels God's mercy toward themselves, so they are merciful to their neighbor. I know from my own experience that all flesh is bound by sin and cannot help but sin; therefore, I am merciful and ask God to free even my enemy from the chains of sin.

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## **CHAPTER 8: TRUE TREASURE IS STORED IN HEAVEN**

**"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (*Matthew 6:19-20*).**

Don't let your heart be bound to worldly things. Don't strive to pile up wealth upon wealth; instead, focus on using what you already have wisely. Let your abundance support those in need. **Set your sights on good works.**

If you have both the desire and the ability to do good, then you can be sure that God's Spirit is within you, and that you are chosen in Christ for the reward of eternal life, which follows from good works.

But ensure that your intentions are pure—do not rob Christ of His honor. Do not credit your good works as earning what has been given to you freely through the merit of His blood.

In Christ, we are children of God. In Christ, we are heirs. In Christ, God chose us, elected us before the world began, recreated us through the gospel, and placed His Spirit within us so that we would do good works **(Ephesians 1–2)**.

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### **Works as Evidence of Faith**

A Christian works solely because it is the will of their Father.

If we do no good and show no mercy, where is our desire for these things?

If we have no desire to do good works, how can God's Spirit be in us? If God's Spirit isn't in us, how can we be His children? How can we be His heirs, joint heirs with Christ to the eternal life promised to all who believe in Him?

Our works testify to what we are, and to the treasure stored up for us in heaven—provided that our intentions are pure, focused only on obeying God's commandment for the sake of His will, because God desires it of us, and because Christ has made it possible.

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### **Lord, Lord**

It is written:

**“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).**

Even if you praise God with your words, call Christ your Lord, speak of scripture, or know every story in the Bible, you'll never truly know if you're chosen or if your faith is genuine. But if you feel a desire in your heart to do God's will and bring forth the fruits of that desire, then you have confidence and hope. Your actions and the Spirit that inspires them assure your heart that you're already entering—or have entered—the kingdom of heaven.

And again:

**“Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:24),**

and no storm of temptation can shake it. For the Spirit of God is in his heart, comforting him and holding him firm on the rock of Christ's sacrifice, by which he is chosen. Nothing can take him from God's hand, for God is stronger than all things.

On the other hand:

**“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand (of his own imagination)” (Matthew 7:26-27),**

and any storm can bring it down. This happens because he doesn't have God's Spirit in him; he doesn't truly understand or act rightly.

As Paul says:



**“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).**

Without God’s Spirit, a person neither understands nor does God’s will, however much he might talk about scripture. Such a person might follow his own ideas, but he cannot fulfill God’s will; he might offer sacrifices, but he doesn’t understand mercy.

It’s easy to say **“Lord, Lord”** to Christ, but that alone won’t let you feel or be assured of the kingdom of heaven. Yet if you do God’s will, you’ll be sure that Christ is truly your Lord and that, in him, you are also a lord—feeling yourself freed from the bondage of sin, full of desire for, and empowered to do, God’s will.

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## **CHAPTER 9: IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH**

Where the Spirit is, there is feeling, for the Spirit makes us feel all things. Where the Spirit is not, there is no feeling—only empty opinion or vain imagination.

**A physician is for the sick, but only for those who feel their sickness, mourn over it, and long for health.** Likewise, Christ serves only those sinners who feel their sin, those who sorrow and mourn in their hearts for spiritual health.

**Health, in this sense, is the power or strength to fulfill the law and keep the commandments.** Anyone who longs for that health—meaning, to follow God’s law—is blessed in Christ and has a promise that this desire will be fulfilled and that he will be made whole.

**"Where the Spirit is, there is feeling, for the Spirit makes us feel all things. Where the Spirit is not, there is no feeling—only empty opinion or vain imagination."**

This longing and consent of the heart to the law of God is the work of the Spirit, which God has poured into your heart as a guarantee so that you might be certain that He will fulfill all the promises He has made to you.

It is also the seal and mark that God places on all those He chooses for everlasting life. As long as you:

- **See your sin,**
- **Mourn it,**
- **Consent to the law, and**
- **Long for righteousness (though you may feel weak),**

the Spirit will keep you through all temptations from despair and will assure your heart that God, because of His truth, will deliver and save you.

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## **Christ's Deeds as Your Salvation**

Indeed, you will be saved through good deeds—not those you have done, but those Christ has done for you, for Christ is yours, and all His deeds are your deeds. Christ is in you, and you are in Him, knit together inseparably.

You cannot be condemned unless Christ is condemned with you, nor can Christ be saved unless you are saved with Him.

Moreover, your heart is good, righteous, holy, and just, for your heart is no enemy of the law but a friend and lover of it. The law and your heart are in agreement; therefore, God is at peace with you.

This consent of the heart to the law is unity and peace between God and man. He is not my enemy who desires to please me and mourns because he lacks the means.

The One who has revealed your disease to you and has made you long for health will, as He has promised, heal you; and He who has freed your heart will, in His perfect time, free your whole being.

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### **The Absence of the Spirit**

He who lacks the Spirit has no true feeling for God's law; he neither desires the power to fulfill it nor despises the pleasures of sin.

Such a person has no more certainty in the promises of God than I would in a tale of Robinhood or some jest claimed to have happened in Rome. Another person could easily make me doubt or believe otherwise, given that I have no experience of it myself.

So it is with those who do not feel the work of the Spirit, and in times of temptation, the categories in their mind fall apart.

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## **CHAPTER 10: RECEIVING A PROPHET'S REWARD**

**"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet"—that is, because he is a prophet—"shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41),**

**“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).**

Note that "**prophet**" refers not only to one who foretells future events but also to one who interprets the difficult passages of scripture.

Whoever receives a prophet, a righteous person, or a disciple will receive the same or similar reward; that is, they will share in the eternal life promised through Christ's blood and merits.

For if you were not chosen for that same eternal life, and if you did not have the same faith, trust in God, and the same Spirit, you could never align yourself with their actions or support them.

Your deeds reveal who you truly are and confirm to your conscience that you have been shown mercy, sanctified through Christ's sufferings, and will, along with all who follow God, receive the reward of eternal life.

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## **CHAPTER 11: THE COMMAND TO KEEP THE LAW**

**“If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments”  
(Matthew 19:17).**

First, remember that when God commands us to do something, He does not do so because we are capable, on our own, of doing what He commands. Rather, by the law, we come to see and understand our own grave condemnation and captivity under sin.

This realization should lead us to repent, come to Christ, and receive mercy, along with the Spirit of God to free, strengthen, and make us able to fulfill God's will—which is the law.

When He says, **“If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments,”** it is as if to say that whoever keeps the commandments has already entered into life. For unless a person first has the Spirit of life within them, given by Christ's work, it is impossible for them to keep the commandments or for their heart to be free to desire them. By nature, we are enemies of the law of God.

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### **Christ's Call to Perfection**

Regarding Christ's words:

**“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:21)**

He is not suggesting that there is a higher perfection than keeping the law of God (for that is complete perfection). Rather, He is revealing the man's blindness; the man failed to see that the law is spiritual and requires the heart.

Because he believed he had not harmed anyone through outward actions, he assumed he loved his neighbor as himself. But when he was called to show acts of love and share his abundance with those in need, he left sorrowfully—**clear evidence that he did not, in fact, love his neighbor as himself.** For if he had been in need, he would not have resented receiving help from another.

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## Hoarding Wealth: A Form of Theft

Furthermore, he did not recognize that it is a form of murder and theft for someone to hoard wealth while failing to show mercy and help his neighbor in need.

God gives one person wealth to assist another in times of need. If your neighbor is in need and you are able to help but do not, you withhold what is due to him and are, in God's eyes, a thief.

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## Hard for a Rich Man

When Christ says, **"It is harder for a rich man"** (one who loves his riches so much that he cannot find it in his heart to help the poor and needy freely and generously) **"to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle"** (Matthew 19:23-24), He shows that such a person has not entered the kingdom of heaven—that is, eternal life.

However, the one who keeps the commandments has already entered into life; he has life and the Spirit of life within him.

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## CHAPTER 12: PRAYER AND FASTING BY FAITH

**However, this kind (of demon) does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).**

But it's not fasting or praying themselves that cast out the demon; after all, He already said they couldn't cast it out because of their

unbelief. It's faith, undoubtedly, that drives out demons, and faith, too, that fasts and prays.

Faith holds tight to God's promises and, in all things, seeks His honor. Faith fasts to bring the body under control of the spirit so that prayer is unhindered, and the spirit can commune freely with God.

Faith also, whenever there is an opportunity, asks God to fulfill His promises for His glory. And God, merciful in His promises and faithful to fulfill them, casts out the demons and grants all that faith desires, satisfying its thirst.

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## CHAPTER 13: THE INHERITANCE OF THE KINGDOM

**"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink..."  
(Matthew 25:34-35).**

Not that a man deserves eternal life by his works, as a laborer earns his wages. Scripture tells us that the kingdom was **"prepared for us from the foundation of the world"** (Ephesians 1:4-6).

We are blessed and sanctified, redeemed from the bitter curse and damnable captivity under sin in which we were born and conceived—through Christ's blood. Christ's Spirit is poured into us to bring forth good works, which are the fruits of the Spirit.

The kingdom, likewise, is the merit of Christ's blood, as are faith, the Spirit, and good works. Nonetheless, the kingdom follows good works, and good works testify that we are heirs of it.

At the day of judgment, these works will testify for the elect, to their comfort and glory, and to the confusion of the ungodly, unbelieving, and faithless sinners, who neither trusted in God's promises nor desired to do His will but, rather, were led by the spirit of their father, the devil, into all abomination, to work wickedness with all desire, delight, and greed.

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## **CHAPTER 14: LOVE AS THE FRUIT OF FORGIVENESS**

**"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47a).**

Not that love was the cause of forgiveness of sins, but rather that forgiveness of sins caused love, as shown in the words:

**"But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (Luke 7:47b)**

Earlier, Jesus commended Simon's judgment when he said that the one who is forgiven most loves most, and at the end, Jesus said:

**"Your faith has saved you (or made you safe); go in peace." (Luke 7:50)**

We cannot love unless we see some benefit or kindness. As long as we look only at the law of God—where we see only sin, damnation, and the wrath of God upon us, indeed, where we were condemned even before birth—we cannot love God. Rather, we may even hate Him as a tyrant, unrighteous and unjust, fleeing from Him as Cain did.

But when the gospel, that glad news of joyful promises, is preached, and we learn that in Christ, God loves us first, forgives us, and has



mercy on us, then we love Him in return, and our deeds of love demonstrate our faith.

This way of speaking is similar to when we say, **“Summer is near, for the trees are blooming.”** Now, the blooming of the trees is not the cause of summer drawing near; rather, the nearness of summer causes the trees to bloom, and the blooms remind us that summer is close. Similarly, Christ teaches Simon here, through the intensity of outward acts of love, to recognize the strong faith within, from which such great love springs.

We often say, **“Do your charity; show your charity; perform a deed of mercy,”** meaning that our deeds reveal how we love our neighbors and how much compassion we have for them in their need.

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### **Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself**

Moreover, it's impossible to love unless we see a reason. Unless we understand in our hearts God's love and kindness toward us in Christ our Lord, we cannot truly love God.

We also say, **“He who does not love my dog does not love me.”** Not that one must first love my dog, but if someone loves me, that love compels him to love my dog, even if the dog deserves no affection. Indeed, if my dog had wronged him, his love for me would still restrain him from seeking revenge and lead him to leave justice to me.

We find similar expressions in Scripture. John says in his first epistle:

**“If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20)**

This does not mean that one should love his brother first and then God, but as John goes on to say:

**“And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” (1 John 4:21)**

To love our neighbor is God’s command, and the one who does not keep this command does not love God. Obeying the command shows how much I love God. If I loved God purely, nothing my neighbor could do would make me hate him or seek revenge on him, since God has commanded me to love him and to leave all vengeance to Him.

Consider that my love for the commandment shows my love for God, and my love for God reflects how much I believe in His mercy, kindness, and goodness, indeed, as a Father to me for Christ’s sake. As much as I believe that God is merciful to me and will fulfill all His promises for Christ’s sake, I see my sins clearly, feel grief over them, repent, and sorrow over sin’s hold on me. I am troubled by that inclination to sin and long earnestly to be healed.

So, naturally, I first see my sin, then I repent and feel sorrow. Then I believe God’s promises: that He is merciful to me, forgives me, and will heal me in time. Then, I love; and I prepare myself to follow His commandment.

**“Do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:28)**

Meaning:

**“You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... And... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).**

It’s as if to say, if you do this—or even if you are not fully able, yet if you desire it, and your spirit sighs, mourns, and longs for the strength

to do it—you have a clear sign and proof that the Spirit of life is in you, and that you are chosen for life everlasting through Christ's blood.

This faith, this Spirit, and this obedience are all gifts purchased by Christ. The deeds themselves, or rather the deeds of Christ's Spirit in you, as well as the reward of eternal life that follows good works, are His gifts.

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### **The Lesson of the Good Samaritan**

Luke continues:

**“When he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'” (Luke 10:35).**

Remember, this is a parable, and parables are not to be taken word for word; rather, we should seek only the intended meaning of the whole. The intent of this parable is to show who a person's neighbor is, or to whom a person should be a neighbor—both are the same—and what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself.

The Samaritan helped him and showed mercy as long as he was present; and when he could stay no longer, he left money behind, and, if that were not enough, he left his promise to cover whatever else might be needed, not abandoning him as long as he had need.

Then Christ said:

**“Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).**

Meaning without distinction or favoritism: whoever needs your help, consider him your neighbor, and be his neighbor in turn, showing mercy as long as he needs your aid.

That is what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself. *Neighbor* is a word of love, meaning that one should always be near, ready, and willing to help in times of need.

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## CHAPTER 15: MISINTERPRETATIONS OF PARABLES

Those who attempt to interpret parables word for word often find themselves trapped, unable to free themselves, and end up preaching falsehoods rather than the truth. Such are those who interpret the “**two denarii**” as representing the Old Testament and the New, or as signifying *opera supererogationis* [*doing more than what is required, especially in moral deeds*]; though *superarrogantia*—[*an attitude of arrogance and superiority, "to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:5)*—might be a more fitting term.

These interpreters suggest that these are deeds exceeding what the law requires, acts of perfection and generosity that one is not obligated to do but undertakes voluntarily, supposedly earning a higher place in heaven or merits that can be shared with others. Some claim that, based on these merits, the pope can grant pardons from the pains of purgatory after one's death.

### The Flaws of This Interpretation

To counter this interpretation, I say: first, **there is no perfection greater than the law itself**. There is no greater perfection than loving God and His will, which is embodied in the commandments, with all

your heart, soul, strength, and mind. To love one's neighbor as oneself is equally profound.

The love with which a person loves himself is remarkable. Just as I would desire pardon if I deserved death, so I should be equally willing to defend my neighbor's life, regardless of any cost to myself or my possessions. One should neither withhold goods nor spare oneself for the sake of a brother, following Christ's example.

**"By this," it is said, "we know love, because He"—that is, Christ—"laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16)**

Christ also says:

**"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13)**

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## **The Perfection of the Law**

Furthermore, no one can fulfill the law: for as John says in the first chapter of his epistle:

**"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8–9)**

And in the Lord's Prayer, we also say:

**"Father... forgive us our sins." (Luke 11:2, 4)**

Now if we are all sinners, then none of us fulfills the law, for he who fulfills the law is without sin. Not Peter, nor Paul, nor any other created being, but only Christ alone can rejoice in fulfilling the law.

In the blood of Christ, who fulfilled the law for us, may every person who repents, believes, loves the law, and mourns for the strength to fulfill it rejoice, no matter how weak a sinner he may be.

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### **The Meaning of the “Two Denarii”**

The “**two denarii**,” therefore, and the trust he left behind to provide more, if needed, signify that he was merciful everywhere, both present and absent, without pretense, hiding, complaint, or excuse, never forsaking his neighbor as long as he had need.

I pray that men may follow this example and leave aside any talk of “**works of supererogation**” [*works that provide some personal merit*].

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## **CHAPTER 16: GOD CHOOSES FIRST, GRACE REVEALED**

**“Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42)**

Mary was first chosen by God and called by grace—not only to recognize her sin but also to hear the word of faith, the promise of salvation, and the joyful news of mercy in Christ. Faith was granted to her so she could believe, and the Spirit of God freed her heart from the bondage of sin. Then, she yielded to God’s will and, above all else, found delight in hearing that word which brought her eternal

salvation, especially from the very mouth of the One who had won such great mercy for her.

**God chooses us first, loves us first, and opens our eyes to see his boundless love for us in Christ.** Only then do we love in return, embrace his will above all, and serve him in the role for which he has chosen us.

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## **Giving and Storing Treasures in Heaven**

**“Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.” (Luke 12:33)**

Such words are not spoken so that we should labor like hired servants, working only for a reward, as if we could earn heaven through merit. For he says just before:

**“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)**

The kingdom, then, comes by the grace of Almighty God through Christ, and such teachings are given partly to remind us of our duty to respond with gratitude.

As it says:

**“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16)**

As if to say: if God has given you such great gifts, do not be ungrateful, but use them to bring Him glory.

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### **Some Scriptures Inspire and Others Warn**

Some teachings are meant to inspire us to trust in God, as in these words:

**“Look (consider) at the birds of the air” (Matthew 6:26),**

**“Consider the lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:28),**

**“Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?” (Matthew 7:9),**

and many others like them.

Other teachings remind us to be sober, to watch and pray, to prepare ourselves against temptations, and to be aware that temptations and occasions for wrongdoing often come when we least expect them. This guards us from being careless, self-assured, or unprepared.

Some things are said so that we may fear the mighty and incomprehensible judgments of God and avoid becoming overconfident in ourselves or taking His mercy for granted, while others are spoken to comfort us so that we do not fall into despair.

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## **Spiritual Meaning Beyond Literal Language**

Likewise, all the examples of the Old Testament serve similar purposes. In short, Scripture often speaks as the world does, but its words are not meant to be understood in a worldly sense, but spiritually. Indeed, only the Spirit of God fully understands them; where the Spirit is absent, there is no true understanding of Scripture, but only fruitless arguments and quarreling over words.

Scripture says that God sees, hears, smells, walks, is with them, is not with them, is angry, is pleased, sends His Spirit, takes His Spirit away, and a thousand similar expressions; yet none of these are true in a worldly sense or as the words themselves sound.

Read the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

**“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)**

And “we,” he says, **“have received the Spirit who is from God that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12)**

For without the Spirit, it is impossible to understand them.

We also read:

**“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)**

And as it says in **John 15:15**:

**The son knows his father's will, while the servant does not.**

**“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,” says Paul, “he is not His.” (Romans 8:9)**

Likewise, he who does not have the Spirit of God is not of God, for it is one and the same Spirit, as you may see in that same passage.

**“He who is of (belongs) to God hears God's words.” (John 8:47a)**

And who belongs to God but the one who has the Spirit of God?

Furthermore, Jesus says:

**“You do not hear, because you are not of God.” (John 8:47b)**

This means that you have no desire for the word of God because you do not understand it; and you do not understand because His Spirit is not within you.

Since Scripture is nothing less than what the Spirit of God has spoken through the prophets and apostles—and can only be understood by the same Spirit—let each person pray to God to send His Spirit, freeing them from natural blindness and ignorance, and granting them understanding and sensitivity to the things of God and the voice of His Spirit.

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## **Understand God’s Process of Salvation in Christ**

First, we are condemned by nature, from the moment of conception and birth, just as a serpent is by nature a serpent, a toad a toad, and a snake a snake. Just as you see a young child drawn to things that carry the risk of death—like fire or water—such that, if left alone, the child would bring harm upon itself again and again, so we, given a

thousand years, would still pursue only what leads to the death of the soul.

Secondarily, of all among humanity whom God has chosen and destined for mercy and grace in Christ, He sends His Spirit. This Spirit opens their eyes, reveals their misery, and brings them to self-awareness so that they come to hate and despise their own sinfulness. They are left shocked and bewildered, at a complete loss, not knowing what to do or where to find help. Then, to keep them from fleeing from God in despair, He comforts them with His sweet promises in Christ and assures their hearts that, for Christ's sake, they are shown mercy, their sins are forgiven, and they are chosen and made children of God, heirs alongside Christ of eternal life. Through faith, they are brought into peace with God.

Now, we cannot ask why God chooses one person and not another, nor think that God is unjust to condemn us before we commit any actual deed, since God has full right and authority over all His creation to do with each as He wills, making each one as He pleases. Our darkness cannot comprehend His light. God will be feared and does not wish His hidden judgments to be known.

Through the light of faith, we can see countless things that are impossible for an unbeliever to understand; likewise, in the light of the blessed vision of God, we will no doubt see things that God now withholds from us. High knowledge often breeds pride, while grace comes with humility. For those reasons, let us focus our efforts on doing the will of God, rather than seeking out His mysteries, which are not for us to understand.

When we are reconciled to God, made His friends and heirs of eternal life, the Spirit that God has poured into us testifies that we cannot continue in the old ways of ignorance. For how could we possibly repent, despise those deeds, and still desire to live in them? We are

certain, therefore, that God has created us anew in Christ and placed His Spirit within us so that we would live a new life—a life marked by good works.

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## CHAPTER 17: UNDERSTANDING GOOD WORKS

To grasp what good works truly are, their purpose, and why they matter, consider the following: the life of a Christian is a private matter between him and God, marked by the spirit's agreement with God's will and lived for His glory. **The ultimate aim of all good works is to glorify God.**

Good works are any actions aligned with God's laws that honor Him and express gratitude. For instance, fasting means abstaining from excess—overindulgence in eating, drunkenness, and worldly distractions (as stated in **Luke 21**). The purpose of fasting is to discipline the body so that the spirit may freely connect with God and speak to Him in peace.

Overindulgence and the burdens of worldly concerns weigh down the spirit, smother it, and entangle it, preventing it from lifting itself up to God.

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### Misguided Practices of Fasting

If a person fasts for any reason other than to subdue the body so that the spirit can focus on God and freely engage in His purposes, they are blind to the true purpose of fasting and unaware of their error,

chasing a false goal. Such intentions and misguided practices are detestable to God.

For example, abstaining from food all day only to indulge in a massive meal afterward—can this truly be called a Christian fast? Some fast from food and drink yet become so consumed by worldly affairs that they never even turn their thoughts to God.

Others avoid butter, eggs, or certain foods on specific days, honoring one saint or another for various superstitious reasons—perhaps to ward off toothaches, headaches, fevers, plagues, sudden death, hanging, drowning, or even the pains of hell.

These practices completely miss the true purpose of fasting, reducing it to empty ritual rather than a sincere spiritual discipline.

Some are so misguided that they fast on a particular Thursday between two St. Mary feast days to honor a saint whose feast falls between Christmas and Candlemas.

*[Candlemas is a Roman Catholic holiday, though it's also observed in some other liturgical traditions.]*

They do this in the hope of being spared from the plague. Such individuals fast without regard for God, completely ignorant of the true purpose of fasting, and instead worship saints as pagans once worshipped idols.

They are engulfed in blindness, unaware of the covenant God made with humanity through Christ's blood. They place no hope or confidence in God, neither believing His promises nor understanding His will, remaining captive under the prince of darkness.

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## **Watching: Staying Spiritually Vigilant**

**"Watch"** means more than staying awake; it calls for alertness and readiness to recognize danger, much like a guard protecting a fortress. The devil's traps are countless and ever-changing, with new temptations arising constantly. Against these, we must prepare ourselves, turning to God, crying out for His mercy to be our shield, fortress, and defense against all evil.

We must ask Him to give us strength, for without Him, we can do nothing. Remember God's promises he has made and the oath He has sworn to fulfill for us for Christ's sake. With strong faith, we must cling to Him, asking Him in His mercy and for His love for Christ, and for the sake of His truth, to fulfill those promises. If we hold fast to God with firm faith and trust His word, then, as Paul says:

**"But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able" (1 Corinthians 10:13).**

That is, if we cling to His promises rather than our own ideas and fanciful imaginations, He will give us his power that will overcome every temptation He allows us to face.

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## **Prayer: The Longing for God**

Prayer is the mourning, the longing, and the desire of the spirit reaching out to God for what it lacks, like a sick man grieving in his heart and longing for health. Faith is always praying. Once we are reconciled to God through faith and have received His mercy and forgiveness, the spirit yearns and thirsts for the strength to do God's will, that God may be honored, His name revered, and His pleasure and will accomplished.

The spirit waits and watches for God's will, always aware of its own frailty and weakness; and when it sees temptation and danger approaching, it turns to God and to the covenant He has made with all who believe and trust in Christ's blood. It pleads with God, for His mercy and truth, for the love He has for Christ, that He would fulfill His promises, give strength, sanctify His name in us, and fulfill his godly will in us.

We pray that God would not see our sins and failures, but instead see His mercy, His truth, and the love He has for His Son, Christ; that for Christ's sake, He would keep us from falling to temptation, protect us from being overcome, deliver us from evil, and from everything that leads us away from His divine will.

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### **Compassion and Intercessory Prayer**

A Christian, through his own experience, understands the weaknesses of others and entrusts their struggles to God alongside his own. Recognizing that no strength or rescue exists apart from God, he shows the same mercy to others that he feels from God.

He values his neighbor's welfare as his own, feeling their pain as if it were his own. Whenever he sees a need, he cannot help but pray for his neighbor as well as himself. His very nature compels him to seek God's honor in all people and to draw everyone closer to Him as much as he can.

This is the law of love, which springs from the blood of Christ into the hearts of all who trust in Him. A Christian does not need to be instructed to pray when he sees his neighbor in need; if he is unaware, simply remind him, and he will naturally fulfill his duty.

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## **CHAPTER 18: TRUST IN GOD, NOT IN THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS**

Now, regarding our desire for others to pray for us, we do this to remind our neighbor of his duty, not because we rely on his holiness. Our trust is in God, in Christ, and in the truth of God's promises. We also have a promise that when two or three, or more, agree together on anything according to God's will, He hears us. Yet, just as God hears the many, He also hears the few, and even the one who prays according to His will and seeks His honor.

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## **CHAPTER 19: THE HEART OF MERCY AND TRUE CHRISTIAN ALMSGIVING**

The one who seeks mercy feels his own misery and sin, mourning in his heart to be freed so that he might honor God. And because of His truth, God must hear him, as Christ says:

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).**

God, for the sake of His truth, must impart Christ's righteousness to him and cleanse his unrighteousness with the blood of Christ.

No matter how weak, feeble, or frail the sinner may be, no matter how often or grievously he sins, as long as this desire, this yearning, and mourning to be freed from sin remains in him, God does not see his sins or count them against him for the sake of His truth and His love for Christ.



In God's eyes, he is not a sinner if he wishes not to be one. The one who desires to be free is already loosening his heart from sin. His heart does not sin but mourns, repents, agrees with God's law and will, and declares that God, who made the law, is righteous and just.

Such a heart, trusting in Christ's blood, is considered fully righteous. His weakness, frailty, and shortcomings are pardoned, and his sins are not counted against him until God gives him more strength and fulfills his desire.

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### **Teaching Weak Faith to Trust in God's Promises**

When those who are weak in faith and unskilled in the mysteries of Christ ask us to pray for them, we should guide them to the truth and promises of God. We should teach them to put their trust in God's promises, in the love that God has for Christ and, for Christ's sake, for us as well.

We must strengthen their weak consciences by showing and proving through scripture that as long as they follow the Spirit and resist sin, it is impossible for them to fall so deeply that God will not lift them up again—if they hold firmly to the anchor of faith, trusting and relying on Christ.

The love that God has for Christ is infinite. Christ did and suffered all things, not for Himself or to gain favor, for He always had the full favor of God and was ever Lord over all things, but to reconcile us to God and make us heirs with Him in His Father's kingdom. God has promised that whoever calls on His name will never be confounded or put to shame.

Scripture says:

**"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand" (Psalms 37:24).**

Who is righteous but the one who trusts in Christ's blood, no matter how weak he may be? Christ is our righteousness, and in Him we should teach everyone to place their trust. We ought to explain to all people the covenant that God has made with us sinners in Christ's blood.

This is our duty: not to make them captives of our own influence, sitting in their consciences and teaching them to rely on our holiness, good deeds, and prayers—feeding our own puffed-up, indulgent, and self-serving appetites from their hard labor and sweat, thereby making ourselves into Christs and saviors.

For if I assume the role of saving others through my merits, am I not setting myself up as a Christ and a savior? I would indeed be a false prophet and a true antichrist, exalting myself and sitting in the temple of God—that is, in the consciences of others.

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### **The Role of Mercy and the Spirit of Christ**

Among Christians, love makes all things shared. Each person owes a debt to others and is bound to serve his neighbor and provide for his neighbor's needs with whatever gifts God has given them.

Just as in the world, rulers and officials maintain peace in society, punish murderers, thieves, and evildoers, while the people, in turn, pay taxes, tolls, and customs to support their governance; so in the gospel, ministers who preach in each church are rightfully entitled to a fair support for themselves and their families. Likewise, those

serving the community of Christ in other necessary roles should be supported.

There is no place for dishonest gain in the gospel—no need to haggle, trade, or act like bartender, twisting the word of God for profit as they do with their wines, adjusting it to suit everyone's tastes, or abusing Christ's name to gain power and authority to satisfy our own arrogance and indulgent desires.

Now you see what prayer is, its purpose, and what it is meant to serve. If you gave me a thousand pounds to pray for you, I am no more obligated than I was before. Human imagination cannot make God's commandment any greater or lesser; it can neither add to nor take away from God's law, which is as great as God Himself.

I am bound to love even the Turk [*Turk was a term used for Muslims in Tyndale's day*] with all my might and strength—yes, even beyond my strength, from the depths of my heart, following the example of how Christ loved me, not holding back goods, body, or life to win him to Christ.

And what more could I do for you, even if you gave me all the world? Where I see need, I cannot help but pray if God's Spirit is truly in me.

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## **The True Meaning of Alms**

**Alms** is derived from a Greek word that represents mercy. Every Christian owes it to his fellow believer, in times of need, to do all he can for him until his need is fully met.

Every Christian should keep Christ always before his eyes as an example to imitate and follow, doing for his neighbor as Christ has

done for him—just as Paul teaches in all his letters, and as Peter teaches in his first letter, and John in his first letter as well.

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## **Paul's Teachings on Good Works**

Paul follows a clear structure in his letters:

1. **The Law:** He first preaches the law, proving that human nature is entirely condemned because the heart desires things contrary to God's will. If we were truly of God, we would naturally desire His will.
  2. **The Gospel:** He then preaches Christ, the gospel, the promises, and the mercy that God offers to all through Christ's blood. Those who believe and take this seriously turn toward God, begin to love Him in return, and prepare themselves to do His will through the Spirit's work within them.
  3. **Unity and Christian Living:** Finally, Paul urges unity, peace, and clarity. He calls believers to avoid quarrels, factions, and disputes over words. Instead, they are to walk in genuine faith under the Spirit's guidance, loving one another as Christ loved us. Through their example of pure living, Christians are to draw all people to Christ.
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## **Sharing Resources as Co-Heirs with Christ**

Christ is Lord over all, and every Christian is a co-heir brought in with Christ, making them rulers over all as well. Each person, therefore, has authority over whatever belongs to another. If your brother or neighbor is in need, and you have the means to help but show no mercy and hold back your hand, you rob him of what is rightfully his, making yourself a thief.

A Christian has the Spirit of Christ. Now, Christ is merciful; if you are not merciful after Christ's example, then you do not have His Spirit. Without Christ's Spirit, you do not belong to Him and have no part with Him.

Even if you show mercy to your neighbor, if you do not do so with the same burning love that Christ has shown you, you must acknowledge your sin and seek mercy in Christ. A Christian has nothing to boast about concerning his own deeds. His only rejoicing is that Christ died for him and that he is washed in Christ's blood.

He does not take pride in his works, does not count his merits, does not claim any higher place in heaven for them, nor does he set himself up as a savior to others through his good works; instead, he gives all honor to God. Even in his greatest acts of mercy, he sincerely recognizes himself as a sinner and is abundantly satisfied with the place Christ has prepared for him.

His good deeds are merely a sign that Christ's Spirit is in him, that he is in Christ, and, through Christ, chosen for eternal life.

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## The Gospel Rejects the "Order of Love" Doctrine

The gospel of Christ knows nothing of this so-called "**order of love**" some imagine, where a person should start by serving themselves and then gradually extend love outward, following some steps I don't understand.

As Paul reminds us:

**"Love does not seek its own gain," (2 Corinthians 12:**

but makes a person forget themselves, turning their own profit toward others, just as Christ didn't seek His own benefit but ours.

This notion of "**myself**" [*meology*] doesn't exist in the gospel; nor is there any special preference given to father, mother, sister, brother, or kin, setting one above another in love.

In Christ, each Christian is Christ to another; every Christian man and woman is Christ himself to their neighbor. And your neighbor's need has the same claim on your goods as Christ himself, who is heir and lord over all. Whatever you owe to Christ, you owe to your neighbor's need. You owe your heart, yourself, and everything you have and can do to your neighbor.

The love that flows from Christ excludes no one and makes no distinction between one and another. In Christ, we are all on equal ground, without favoritism.

*[Meology is a made-up word, not original to me, describing the approach to preaching found in many pulpits today that makes it "all about you", rather than all about God and Jesus Christ. Meology also refers to a flawed approach to Bible reading and study, where many seek themselves in the text. The Bible was written for you, but it is not about you; it is about God. It is about Jesus Christ. To counter this faulty approach to the Bible, we should be looking for Them. What do They love? What do They hate? What are Their desires? What motivates Them to do what They do?]*

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## **Caring for Your Household and Beyond**

Nevertheless, while a Christian's heart is open to all and accepts everyone, the ability to give materially doesn't extend infinitely. For that reason, it's established that each person should care for their own household: father, mother, elders who have supported you, wife, children, and servants.

If you neglect to care for your own household, you are worse than a pagan, betraying the very responsibility entrusted to you by the congregation. As Scripture says:

**“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8).**

When you have fulfilled your duty to your household and still have an abundance of God's blessings, that surplus belongs to the poor—those who cannot work, would work but cannot find work, or have no friends to help them.

The poor within your own church are your first responsibility, for every church should care for its own. If those in your local congregation are provided for, and you still have more to give, and you hear of need among your brethren even a thousand miles away, you are indebted to them as well.

Yes, we are even debtors to nonbelievers in need, provided that we do not support them in ways that oppose, dishonor or blaspheme Christ.

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## **Mercy as a Mark of True Faith**

Therefore, every person who needs your help is your father, mother, sister, and brother in Christ, just as everyone who does the will of the Father is father, mother, sister, and brother to Christ himself **(Matthew 12:50)**.

Furthermore, if anyone is an unbeliever and a false Christian, abandoning their household—their wife, children, and those who cannot help themselves—then you are obligated, if you have the means, to support them just as you would your own family. They have just as much right to your goods as you do. If you withhold mercy from them, while you have the ability to help, then you are a thief.

When you show mercy, you fulfill your duty and prove yourself a faithful servant in the household of Christ, and from Christ, you shall receive your reward and gratitude.

Even if the entire world were yours, every brother has a rightful share in your goods, for we are all heirs together with Christ. Moreover, those who are wealthy and possess wisdom are responsible to see that the poor are put to work, so that as many as are able may feed themselves by the labor of their own hands, according to the scripture and the commandment of God.

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## **The Purpose of Almsgiving**

Now you see what almsgiving truly means and why it matters. Whoever seeks with their alms more than to show mercy to a neighbor, to help a brother or sister in need, to fulfill their duty to their brother or sister, or to give what is owed, is blind and does not



understand what it is to be a Christian or to share in the fellowship of Christ's blood.

Regarding good works, know that all works are good when done within God's law, in faith, and with thankfulness to God. Understand that in doing these works, you please God in whatever you do that is within His law, even in something as simple as drinking water.

And trust me, if essential things like wind or water were taken away, you would quickly realize how precious they are and feel grateful, giving thanks to God for providing them.

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### **The Equality of Christian Work in God's Eyes**

Furthermore, make no distinction between types of work; whatever comes to your hands, do it according to time, place, and the position God has given you, whether high or low. In terms of pleasing God, no work is greater than another.

God doesn't look at your work as the world does, as if the appearance or impressiveness of the work pleases Him, or as if He needs it. God looks first at your heart—at your faith in His words, your trust in Him, and your love for Him because of His mercy toward you.

He considers the heart with which you work, not the work itself; He considers how you accept the position He's given you, not what position you hold, whether apostle or shoemaker.

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## Preaching, Willing Service, and the Spirit's Assurance

Consider this example: you're a kitchen servant washing dishes for your master; another is an apostle preaching God's word. About this apostle, listen to what Paul says:

**"If I preach the gospel,"** he says, **"I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me,"** as if to say, **"God has made me so."** He adds,

**"Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward"**—that is, then I am assured that God's Spirit is within me and that I am chosen for eternal life.

**"But if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship"**—meaning, if I don't do it out of love for God but rather to make a living or for some worldly purpose, then I only perform the duty God has assigned me, yet I am not pleasing God myself. **(1 Corinthians 9:16-17)**

Now, take note: if this apostle does not preach—as many do not, especially those who not only make themselves apostles but demand that people regard them as greater than apostles, even greater than Christ Himself—then **"woe"** is upon him, meaning his condemnation is just.

If he preaches with a heart not truly devoted, he still performs the office God has assigned him, and those with the Spirit of God will hear God's voice, even if He speaks through a ass . However he preaches, he has no reason to boast simply because he preaches.

But if he preaches willingly, with a true heart and a conscience devoted to God, then he has his reward: he feels the foretaste of eternal life and the working of the Spirit of God within him. And as he

experiences God's goodness and mercy, you can be sure he also feels his own weakness, frailty, and unworthiness.

He mourns and acknowledges his sin, knowing his heart does not rise to work with the full zeal and love that is in Christ our Lord. Yet he is still at peace with God through faith and trust in Christ Jesus. The Spirit's earnest work within him testifies and assures his heart that God has chosen him and that God's grace will be sufficient, which is by no means idle in him. He places no trust in his works.

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### **Serving Faithfully in Humble Roles**

Now you, who serve in the kitchen as nothing more than a kitchen helper, receive all things from the hand of God; you know that God has placed you in that role, and you submit to His will. You serve your master not as if he were merely a man, but as if he were Christ Himself, with a pure heart, just as Paul instructs:

**“Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.”  
(Ephesians 6:5-8)**

You put your trust in God and seek your reward from Him alone. Furthermore, there is not a good deed done that doesn't fill your heart with joy; yes, when you hear the word of God preached by an apostle and see people turning to God, you rejoice in it. Your heart bursts with joy, springs and leaps within you, that God is honored, and in your heart, you do the same as that apostle—perhaps with even greater delight and a more fervent spirit.

As Christ says:

**“He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward” (Matthew 10:41)—**

meaning that whoever supports or consents to a prophet’s work shares in the same Spirit, the same promise of everlasting life, and is chosen as surely as the prophet himself.

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### **True Worth of All Work in God’s Sight**

Now, if you compare one deed to another, there is indeed a difference between washing dishes and preaching the word of God; but in terms of **pleasing God**, there is no difference at all. Neither task is pleasing unless God has chosen the person, placed His Spirit in them, and purified their heart by faith and trust in Christ.

Let each person faithfully carry out the role Christ has placed them in and serve their brothers and sisters through it as stated in **1 Corinthians 7:17-24:**

**“Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.” (*Paraphrase*)**

If a person is in a humble position, let them patiently remain there until God raises them up and exalts them to a higher place.

Let kings and those in authority seek Christ in their roles, providing peace and safety to the community; punishing sin—but with mercy—feeling the same sorrow and reluctance as if they were cutting off a finger or joint, an arm or leg, from their own body, if such a disease

threatened that either the limb must be removed or the entire body would perish.

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## **Honoring God Through Honest Labor and Charity**

Let every person, no matter their craft or occupation—whether brewer, baker, tailor, grocer, merchant, or farmer—commit their work to the well-being of the community, serving their fellow people as they would serve Christ Himself.

**“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (Colossians 3:23).**

Let them buy and sell honestly, without deception or taking advantage of their neighbors; in doing so, they show mercy, and their work pleases God.

When you receive payment for your labor or goods, you receive only what is due to you, for in serving your brethren, they are obliged to give you what you need to sustain yourself and your household. Let your excess support the poor, as there will always be those in need in towns, cities, and villages—likely in great numbers.

Remember, we are members of one body and should serve one another with mercy, knowing that whatever we possess is a gift from God, given to help our brethren.

**“Freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8).**

## **Guarding the Heart Against Worldly Attachments**

Those who eat, let them eat with gratitude to God, but let not the food draw their hearts away from Him; and those who drink, let them do likewise.

He who has a wife, let him thank God for the blessing, but let not his wife turn his heart from God; in this, he pleases God and has His word as his guide.

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## **CHAPTER 20: THE DANGER OF OUTWARD PIETY WITHOUT THE WORD OF GOD**

In all things, look to the word of God, put your trust in it, not in outward appearances, in showy garments, or in fanciful rituals. Seek the word of God in all matters; do nothing without it, no matter how impressive it may seem. Anything done apart from the word of God, count as idolatry.

**“the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21).**

Do not be dazzled by outward forms or appearances that are without the word of God. The world has always been led astray by outward displays—by the deceptive beauty and shining surface of hypocrisy, feigned fasting, praying, singing, and the hollow and superstitious rituals of ceremonies and sacrifices.

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## **John the Baptist's Example of True Repentance**

Take John the Baptist as an example: he, who was praised by Christ and declared the greatest among those born of women, with his fasting, praying, and strict way of life, led the Jews to wonder if he might be the Christ, though no scripture or miracle declared it so.

Such is the blindness of human nature, focused on the outward appearance of works, ignoring the inward word that speaks to the heart.

When they sent to John, asking if he were the Christ, he denied it. When they asked who he was and what he said about himself, he did not say:

**"I am the one who fasts, prays, drinks no wine, eats neither meat nor fish but lives on wild honey and locusts, wearing a coat of camel's hair and a leather belt."**

Instead, he said:

**"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (John 1:23).**

My voice alone is what pertains to you; these outward practices you marvel at are for me alone, for the taming of my body. To you, I am only a voice, a message, and that message is what I preach. My preaching, if received by a penitent heart, will teach you how to live and please God as He pours out His grace upon each person.

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## **The Deception of Hypocritical Traditions**

John preached repentance, saying:

**“Prepare the way of the lord; make his paths straight.” (Matthew 3:3)**

The way of the Lord is repentance, not the hypocritical practices born of human invention. It is impossible for Christ to come to a person unless that person knows themselves, recognizes their sin, and truly repents and:

**“Make His paths straight.”**

These paths are the law, rightly understood as God has given it. Christ says:

**“Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.” (Matthew 17:11)**

This refers to John the Baptist. John restored the law and the scriptures to their true meaning and understanding, which the Pharisees had partially obscured and nullified through their traditions, as Christ rebukes them here:

**“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3)**

They had also corrupted the law with their own interpretations, making it incomprehensible, which is why Christ rebukes them again:

**“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.” (Matthew 23:13)**

The Pharisees partly beguiled the people and blinded their eyes by disguising themselves, as described in that same chapter. They made broad and large phylacteries and did all their works to be seen by others, so that people would marvel at their outward displays and the ways they masked themselves beyond how God had made them.



They also deceived the people with the false holiness of hypocritical fasting, praying, and almsgiving, as noted in **Matthew 6**. They did all this for profit, to hold authority, to occupy people's consciences, and to be regarded as if they were God Himself, so that people would place their trust in their perceived holiness rather than in God, as it is written:

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.”  
(Matthew 23:14)**

For that reason, do nothing counterfeit or false, and act only in accordance with the word of God. Once you understand this, the word will teach you all things—how to use outward actions and the purpose to which they should be directed.

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### **The Danger of Misguided Zeal**

Beware of relying on your good intentions, a good heart, affection, or zeal, as it is often called. Peter, with good intentions and sincere zeal, rebuked Christ in **Matthew 26:30-35** because Christ said He must go to Jerusalem and be killed; yet Christ called him **“Satan”** for his efforts—a name fitting for the devil—and said:

**“You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:23, BSB).**

With good intentions and fervent affection for Christ, the sons of Zebedee wished to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (**Luke 9:51-56**), but Christ rebuked them, saying they did not know what spirit they were of—that is, they did not realize how worldly and fleshly-minded they still were.

Peter struck Malchus and cut his ear off out of zeal, but Christ condemned his action (**John 18:10-11**). Even the Jews, with fervent intentions and zeal, crucified Christ and persecuted the apostles. As Paul testifies:

**“I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” (Romans 10:2).**

Thus, there is a profound difference between acting from good intentions and acting from true understanding.

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### **Seek Knowledge of God’s Will**

Seek knowledge, so that you may know God’s will and what He desires of you. Our own mind, intentions, and zeal are blind; whatever we do from them is condemned by God. For this reason, God has made a covenant between Himself and us, containing both what He desires us to do and what He wants us to ask of Him.

Do nothing to please God except what He commands, and ask nothing of Him except what He has promised. Misguided zeal leads to grave consequences, as evidenced by the Jews who killed Stephen. They did so because he demonstrated from scripture that:

**“The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands”  
(Acts 7:48).**

Churches were originally established for people to gather and hear the word of God preached, not for the purposes they now serve.

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## **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

The temple where God desires to be worshiped is the heart of a person. Christ says:

**“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)**

This means that when a repentant heart consents to God’s law and longs in strong faith for God’s promises, God is truly honored. In this way, we recognize His righteousness in all His laws and trust in all His promises. Any other form of worship is idolatry.

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## **The Call to Genuine Mercy and Love**

**“You shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:14)**

Read the text before, and you will see that Christ does here the same as He does in Matthew 5—that is, He reminds us of our duty to be toward the poor as Christ is toward us. He also teaches us that we cannot truly know whether our love is genuine, or whether it springs from Christ, as long as we are kind only to those who can repay us.

But if we show mercy to the poor, out of a conscience devoted to God and with compassion and heartfelt love—a compassion and love that arise from the love we have for God in Christ, for the pure mercy and love He has shown us—then we have a sure sign that we are loved by God, cleansed in Christ’s blood, and chosen, through Christ’s merit, for eternal life.

Scripture speaks as a father does to his young son:

**“Do this or that, and then I will love you.”**

Yet, the father already loves his son deeply and uses all his strength and wisdom to win his child over with love and kindness, guiding him to do what is fitting, honest, and good for his own sake. A devoted father and mother love their children even when they go astray, willing to shed their own blood to help them become better and to bring them back onto the right path.

And a natural child does not labor to earn his father's love through works; instead, he recognizes the love his father already has for him. Because of this, he loves in return, delights in doing his father's will, and strives to show gratitude.

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## **CHAPTER 21: THE SPIRIT OF GOD: THE ROOT OF LOVE, FAITH, AND TRUE GOOD WORKS**

### **The Spirit Above Philosophy**

The spirit of the world does not understand the words of God—nor does the spirit of the wise of this world, nor the spirit of philosophers, nor the ethics of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle,—as you may see in the first and second chapters of **1 Corinthians**. Yet many shamelessly rail and blaspheme, saying:

**"How could he understand scripture, since he is no philosopher and has not studied metaphysics?"**

They also mockingly ask:

**"How can he be a theologian when he does not even know what subjectum in theologia means?"**

However, just as a man without the spirit of Aristotle or philosophy may understand scripture by the Spirit of God, so too can he, by that same Spirit, recognize that God is to be sought in all scripture and in all things—even if he does not know what *subjectum in theologia* means, for that term is of human invention.

*["Subjectum in theologia" refers to the underlying subject or foundation in theology, often dealing with the nature of God, humanity, and the relationship between them.]*

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## **Love and the Commandments**

If you were to say to someone with the Spirit of God,

**"The love of God is the keeping of the commandments, and to love one's neighbor is to show mercy."**

he would understand without argument or dispute that keeping God's commandments springs from the love of God, and that mercy flows from the love for one's neighbor.

Aristotle, on the other hand, would deny such a concept, and a scholastic theologian might make twenty distinctions. If you were to say, as John does in **1 John 4:20**:

**"How can one who does not love his neighbor, whom he sees, love God, whom he has not seen?"**

Aristotle might argue that one must first love his neighbor and then God, and that love for God comes from love for neighbor.

But the one who feels the Spirit of God working within him and understands the wrath from which Christ's blood has saved him knows that it is impossible to love father, mother, sister, brother,

neighbor, or even oneself rightly unless it springs from the love of God.

He perceives that love for one's neighbor is a sign of love for God, as good fruit reveals a good tree, and that love for one's neighbor accompanies and follows the love of God, just as heat accompanies and follows fire.

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### **Good Works as Fruits of Love**

Similarly, when scripture says that Christ will reward each person at the resurrection according to their deeds, the ethics of Aristotle might claim:

**“By the multitude of good works, you can and must obtain everlasting life, and even a place in heaven that is high or low according to the quantity of your good works.”**

Yet, Aristotle does not understand what a **“good work”** means in the way Christ speaks of it, as he sees only outward actions and not the heart.

But one **with God's Spirit** understands this. He knows that **good works are nothing but the fruits of love, compassion, mercy, and a tender heart**, which a Christian has for his neighbor. He understands that **this love for neighbor springs from his love for God**, His will, and His commandments.

He also understands that this **love for God arises from the infinite love and boundless mercy that God first showed us in Christ**, as John says:

**"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10)**

## **Faith as the Root of All Good**

In conclusion, a Christian feels that the unspeakable love and mercy God has toward us, the Spirit that works all things according to God's will, the love with which we love God, the love we have for our neighbor, the mercy and compassion we show them, and the eternal life that awaits us in Christ are all gifts from God, purchased by Christ.

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## **CHAPTER 22: REWARDS AS EVIDENCE, NOT EARNED WAGES**

If scripture always said, **"Christ shall reward you according to your faith,"** or **"according to the hope and trust you have in God,"** or **"according to the love you have for God and your neighbor,"** it would be equally true. As Peter writes:

**"Receiving the end,"** or reward, **"of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9).**

Yet spiritual things cannot be known except by their works, just as a tree can only be known by its fruit.

How could I know that I loved my neighbor if I were never given an opportunity to show him mercy? How could I know that I loved God if I never suffered for His sake? How could I know that God loved me if

there were no weakness, temptation, danger, or peril from which God could deliver me?

**So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29–30).**

Here you see that a Christian, in all his actions, considers nothing but the glory of God alone and the upholding of God's truth. He does and refrains from doing all things out of love, for the sole purpose of bringing glory and honor to God, as Christ teaches in the Lord's Prayer.

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### **God's Provision and Contentment**

Moreover, when Christ says we shall receive much more in this world, it is truly so—even now, we have already received so much more. For unless a person had felt the infinite mercy, goodness, love, and kindness of God, the fellowship of Christ's blood, and the comfort of Christ's Spirit within their heart, they could never have forsaken anything for God's sake.

**"Whoever forsakes house, brothers, sisters, etc., for Christ's sake and the gospel's, shall receive a hundredfold—houses, brothers," etc. (Mark 10:29)—that is, in a spiritual sense.**

**"For all things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21)**

For Christ shall be all things to you. The angels, all Christians, and whoever does the will of the Father shall be as father, mother, sister,



and brother to you, and all that belongs to them shall be yours. And God will care for you and provide all you need, as long as you seek only His honor.

If you were lord over the whole world—even over ten worlds—before you knew God, yet your appetite would not be quenched; you would thirst for more. But if you seek only His honor, He will satisfy your thirst; you will have all that you desire and will be content. Even if you live among unbelievers and the most cruel nations on earth, He will be a Father to you and defend you, just as He did for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints whose lives you read of in Scripture.

All those who have gone before us are examples to strengthen our faith and trust in God's word. It is the same God who has sworn to us all that He swore to them; He is as faithful as ever, and therefore He will fulfill His promises to us just as He did to them, if we believe as they did.

**"The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice"—that is, Christ's voice—"and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).**

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## **Good Works Testify, They Do Not Earn**

This text, and others like it, declares what follows from good works, showing that our deeds will either testify for us or against us on that day, reminding us to be diligent and fervent in doing good.

However, you must not understand this to mean that we gain God's favor or the inheritance of life through the merits of good works, as

hired workers earn wages. For if that were so, you would be robbing Christ, from whose:

**"Fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16)**

That is, God's favor was so complete in Christ that, for His sake, He grants us His favor, as Paul also affirms:

**"He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."  
(Ephesians 1:6–7)**

Thus, forgiveness of sins is our redemption in Christ, not a reward for works.

**"In Him,"** Paul says in the same passage, **"He chose us before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4)**—that is, long before we (were born) and did any good works.

Through faith in Christ, we are also made children of God, as John writes:

**" But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12, KJV).**

## **Christ as Our Fullness**

God, with all His fullness and riches, dwells in Christ, and we must draw all things from Christ alone. As it is written:

**"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36).**

Here you see that the wrath and vengeance of God rest upon every person until faith comes. Faith and trust in Christ drive out the wrath of God and bring favor, the Spirit, power to do good, and everlasting life.

Furthermore, until Christ has given you light, you cannot understand the true goodness of your works; and until His Spirit has freed your heart, you cannot willingly consent to good works.

All that is good within us—both will and works—comes from the favor of God through Christ, to whom be all praise. Amen.

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### **Understanding God's Will Through the Spirit**

**"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority." (John 7:17)**

This text does not mean that anyone, by their own strength, power, or so-called free will, can do the will of God before they have received the Spirit and strength of Christ through faith. Rather, it aligns with what is spoken in John 3, when Nicodemus marveled at how a person could be born again:

**"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6)**

In other words, one who has the Spirit through faith, who is reborn and made new in Christ, understands the things of the Spirit and the meaning behind spiritual teachings. But one who is still in the flesh, as Paul describes in **1 Corinthians 2:12-16**—a natural man led only by blind reason—can never reach the understanding of the Spirit.

Christ provides an example, saying:

**"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)**

The one who speaks of the Spirit cannot be understood by the natural person, who is still flesh and perceives only the things of the flesh. Thus, Christ means here: If anyone has the Spirit and agrees with the will of God, that person will immediately understand what I mean.

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## **CHAPTER 23: BLESSED IN ACTION: THE SOURCE AND ROLE OF GOOD DEEDS**

**"If you understand these things, blessed are you if you do them."  
(John 13:17)**

A Christian's heart aligns with the will, law, and commandments of God. He hungers and thirsts for the strength to fulfill them and mourns day and night, earnestly seeking God to grant him, according to His promises, the power to fulfill God's will with love and desire. His deeds then testify that he is blessed and that the Spirit, which blesses us in Christ, is within him, providing such strength.

The outward actions reveal what is within, as Christ said:

**"The very works that I do—bear witness of Me." (John 5:36)**

And again:

**"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)**

And again:

**"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me." (John 14:21)**

And again:

**"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... He who does not love Me does not keep My words." (John 14:23-24)**

The outward deed testifies to the inward heart. As Christ says:

**"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:10)**

This means that, as you see My love for the Father in that I keep His commandments, so shall your love for Me be evident in that you keep My commandments.

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## **True Blessing and the Source of Good Works**

You may not think that our actions bless us first, as if we could somehow earn God's favor and His grace in Christ on our own. It's not as if, in our natural state, as we were born in Adam, we could look at God's law, obey it by our own strength, become righteous, and then gain God's favor with that righteousness—like the philosophers talk about human righteousness, or like the kind of

righteousness in human law that's satisfied with the hypocrisy of outward actions alone. No, quite the opposite.

Look at what Jesus says:

**"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."  
(John 15:16)**

In the same chapter, He also says:

**"I am the vine, you are the branches... without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).**

### **Wild Tree Transplanted into a Holy Garden**

That's exactly how it is with us. In Adam, we are all like wild trees, and God chooses whom He will, takes them out of Adam, and plants them in the garden of His mercy. He grafts in them the Spirit of Christ, which then bears the fruit that aligns with God's will—a fruit that shows God has blessed us in Christ.

And remember this: as long as we live, we are still partly driven by self-serving desires and appetites, even though we are in Christ, and it is not held against us for Christ's sake. The remnants of the old Adam, that wild nature, remain in us, sending out branches and leaves and producing fruit whenever it finds the chance. We have to fight against this, subdue it, and transform it bit by bit through prayer, fasting, watching, virtuous reflection, and holy actions, until we become entirely spiritual.

Jesus says:

**"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:33)**

The yeast is the Spirit, and we are the flour, needing to be seasoned by the Spirit little by little until we are fully spiritual.

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## **God's Mercy and the Promise of Eternal Life**

**"Who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6).**

This means that as a person's deeds are, so will their reward be: our deeds reveal who we are, just as a tree is known by its fruit, and a tree is praised according to its fruit. The reward is given through God's mercy and truth, by the worthiness and merits of Christ. Whoever repents, believes the gospel, and trusts in Christ's merits is an heir with Christ to eternal life.

As assurance of this, the Spirit of God is poured into their heart as a guarantee, freeing them from the bonds of Satan and giving them desire and strength that grows each day, in proportion to how diligently they seek God in Christ's name; and eternal life follows a life of good deeds.

**"I believe,"** says St. Paul in the same epistle:

**"That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)**

That is, what we endure here could never earn the reward that will be given there.

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### **The Weakness of Human Works and the Strength of God's Mercy**

Moreover, if our reward were to depend on our works, no one would be saved, because even our best deeds, measured against the law, are sinful and deserving of condemnation.

**"By the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified." (Romans 3:20)**

The law does not justify us; it only exposes our sin, compelling the repentant sinner to flee to the sanctuary of mercy in the blood of Christ. No matter how much we repent or how willing we are to follow God's law, we are weak, and the traps and temptations are so numerous that we stumble daily, even hourly. We would be driven to despair if our salvation depended on our works.

Whoever attributes eternal life to the merit of works must fall into one of two errors:

- 1. The Blind Pharisee**

They fail to see that the law is spiritual while they are earthly. Such a person takes pride in the outward appearance of their deeds, despises the weak, and justifies themselves by comparison.

- 2. The Despairing Soul**

If they understand that the law is spiritual and that they cannot meet its demands, they will fall into despair.

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## **Rejoicing in Christ as Our Hope and Righteousness**

Let every Christian, therefore, rejoice in Christ, our hope, trust, and righteousness. In Him, we are loved, chosen, and accepted into the inheritance of eternal life—neither boasting in our perfection nor despairing in our weakness.

The closer a person is to God, the more clearly they see their own flaws and the unattainable perfection of God's standard in this life. For this reason, they long to be with Christ, where sin is no more.

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## **Trusting in God's Strength Amidst Human Weakness**

Let those who are weak, who find they cannot achieve what they desire to do, not despair; but let them turn to the One who is strong, who has promised to give strength to all who ask in Christ's name.

Let them cry out to God, ask Him to fulfill His promises, and commit themselves to Him. He, in His mercy and truth, will strengthen them and make them feel the depth of His love for them in Christ, no matter how weak they are.

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## **Righteousness in Action, Not Knowledge Alone**

**"It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God,  
but it is the doers of the law who will be declared righteous."  
(Romans 2:13, BSB)**

This text is clear enough that it hardly needs explaining. In this chapter, Paul argues that natural law did not benefit the Gentiles. The law of God was inscribed on the hearts of the Gentiles, as seen in the laws, statutes, and ordinances they established in their cities, yet they failed to keep them. The powerful oppress the weak for their own gain, using the law as a tool of violence. Everyone praises the law as long as it benefits or pleases them, but when the law curtails their own desires, they resist it.

Paul further argues that knowledge alone did not help the Gentiles. Although the educated among them (such as the philosophers) recognized God's existence through creation, they still lacked the power to worship Him.

In this second chapter, Paul also proves that the Jews, even with the written law, gained no advantage—they couldn't keep it and became idolaters, murderers, adulterers, and violators of all that the law prohibited.

He concludes, therefore, that the Jew is just as condemned as the Gentile. If simply hearing the law could have justified them, then the Jews would have been righteous. But righteousness requires doing the law, and since the Jew failed to do so, he stands condemned like the Gentile.

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### **The Limits of the Law Without Christ**

Merely proclaiming and knowing the law only exposes a person's sin; it does not grant the strength or help needed to keep it. The law crushes the conscience, without giving any desire or ability to fulfill it.

Faith in Christ, however, gives both the desire and the power to live by the law. It is true that the one who does the law is righteous, but no one can truly do this apart from believing in and trusting Christ.

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## CHAPTER 24: FAITH, OBEDIENCE, AND THE LAW OF FREEDOM

### Building on the Foundation of Christ

**"If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward." (1 Corinthians 3:14)**

The context of this chapter—what comes before and what follows—makes the meaning clear. Paul is talking about teaching, doctrine, or preaching. He says that he himself has laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ, and that no one can lay any other foundation. Therefore, he urges everyone to be careful about what they build on that foundation.

Paul uses a metaphor from the goldsmith, who tests metals with fire, saying that fire—meaning the judgment of scripture—will test every person's work, that is, their preaching and teaching.

If anyone builds on the foundation Paul laid, that is, Jesus Christ, with **"gold, silver, or precious stones"** (which represent true doctrine approved by scripture), then they will receive their reward. That reward is the assurance that their teaching is from God, that God's Spirit is with them, and that they will receive the reward Christ has earned for them.

On the other hand, if anyone builds with **"wood, hay, or straw"** (representing doctrines born of human imagination, traditions,

and ideas that don't hold up when examined by scripture), they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, yet as if escaping through fire. In other words, it will be painful for them to realize they wasted their efforts and see their work destroyed. However, if they repent and embrace the truth in Christ, they will find mercy and be saved.

But if Paul were alive today and wanted to defend his own teachings, he would likely be tested not by the fire of scriptural judgment (which people now dismiss entirely), but by the pope's laws and the literal fire of burning stakes.

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## **True Obedience and the Role of Reward**

**"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body." (2 Corinthians 5:10)**

As your deeds reveal who you are, so will your reward be. If your deeds are evil, then God's wrath is upon you, for your heart is corrupt; and this will be your reward if you do not repent.

Therefore, fear God and cry out for His grace, that you may come to love His laws. And when you do love them, do not stop until you have obtained the strength from God to fulfill them; then you can be assured that a good reward will follow.

This reward is not earned by your deeds but purchased for you by Christ's deeds. It is Christ's work that has also won for you the desire for God's law and the strength to follow it.

Remember as well that a reward is something given freely, not something deserved. What is deserved should be called, if you give it its proper name, wages or payment. A reward is given freely to inspire love and to make friends.

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## **Obedience to Authority as Service to Christ**

**"Whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord." (Ephesians 6:8)**

**"From the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance." (Colossians 3:24)**

These verses are exceedingly clear. Paul, like Peter, urges servants to obey their masters wholeheartedly and with good will, no matter how unjust they may be. Indeed, he calls for all those under authority to obey sincerely and with a conscience toward God, because God has ordained it to be so, no matter how wicked the rulers might be.

Children must obey their parents, however harsh or unkind they may be; likewise, a wife her husband, a servant his master, and citizens their leaders or king. Why? **"For you serve the Lord,"** as it says in **Colossians 3:24**. **"We belong to Christ, for He has purchased us"**, as we read in **Romans 14:8**, **1 Corinthians 6:20**, and **1 Peter 1:18–19**. Christ is our Lord, and we are His possession, and so are His commandments.

The cruelty or unkindness of a parent, spouse, master, lord, or king should never cause us to despise the commandment of our gracious Lord, Christ, who did not spare His own blood for our sakes. He has purchased for us, by His blood, the reward of eternal life—a life that

will come after a patient, faithful life, testifying by our good deeds that we are chosen.

Moreover, we are so driven by human nature that, when rulers are good, we cannot easily discern if we are obeying out of love for Christ and God through Him. But if you can find it in your heart to do good to those who repay you with evil, then you can be certain that the same Spirit is in you that was in Christ.

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### **God Does the Avenging Rather Than Personal Retribution**

Paul writes:

**"He who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done."  
(Colossians 3:25)**

This means that God will fully avenge you; He sees every wrong done against you, yet He allows it for a time so that you may experience patience, feel the work of His Spirit within you, and be made complete. Therefore, do not even wish for vengeance; leave all vengeance to God, as Christ did. As Peter writes:

**"When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten." (1 Peter 2:23)**

Paul's intent is to lead all people into this kind of obedience, patience, humble heart, and genuine feeling—not into the empty arguments of those who think their so-called great merits earn them high places in heaven.

Such people, who do not feel the Spirit of God working in them, obey no one. If the king merely does right by them, they [*the popes*] will

halt all religious practices in the entire kingdom, curse, excommunicate, and damn it beyond hell's depths. They have driven people out of their senses and made them believe, as it says in **Acts 10:4**:

**"Your prayers and alms have come up as a memorial before God."**

This means God has not forgotten you; even if He does not respond immediately, He watches and sees your prayers and alms.

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## **CHAPTER 25: THE HEART AND THE LAW OF FREEDOM**

Prayer comes from the heart. God looks first at the heart, then at the action, as seen in **Genesis 4:4-5**, where God looked first on Abel, then on his offering. If the heart is impure, the action does not please God, as we see with Cain. Notice the order:

**"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always." (Acts 10:1-2)**

Cornelius feared God, meaning he trembled at the thought of breaking God's commandments. Then he prayed continually. Prayer is the fruit, the outcome, the act of faith—it is simply the heart's longing for the things a person lacks and that God has promised to give. Cornelius also gave alms, which is the fruit, outcome, or act of compassion and pity toward one's neighbor.

What a glorious and true faith this is, one that so trusts God and believes His promises that it fears breaking His commandments and is

merciful to its neighbor! This is the faith spoken of by Peter, Paul, John, *[and James]*, by which we are justified and saved. Anyone who imagines a different kind of faith deceives themselves, becoming an empty-headed disputer, fighting over words without any true feeling in their heart.

Even if you agree that the law is “**good, righteous, and holy,**” feel sorrow and repentance for breaking it, and grieve over your lack of strength to keep it, this alone does not reconcile you with God. In fact, without the promises of forgiveness and help, and faith in your heart to believe in them, you would soon fall into despair and even curse God. It is faith, then, that reconciles you with God.

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### **Faithful Prayer and the Freedom of the Gospel**

Faith prays constantly. She is ever aware of her weaknesses and flaws and ever mindful of God’s promises, for which she longs, everywhere and always. But blind unbelief does not pray constantly, nor in all places, but only in church—and only in such churches where it is not permitted to preach God’s promises or to teach people to trust in them.

When Faith prays, she does not bring her good deeds to the table, saying, “**Lord, because of my good deeds, do this or that for me,**” nor does she make deals with God, saying, “**Lord, grant me this, and I will do that for you.**”

Such practices—mumbling through prayers, making pilgrimages, fasting on certain days, or joining a specific order—are not acts of faith but of unbelief and idolatry.

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## **Perfect Law of Freedom in Christ**

**“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:25)**

The law of freedom requires a willing heart, or, if you fulfill it, it reveals a heart freed from the grip of Satan. The preaching of the law does not make anyone free but binds them; it is the key that binds all consciences to eternal condemnation when it is preached, just as the promises of the gospel are the key that releases all repentant consciences that were bound through the preaching of the law.

**“He will be blessed in what he does,”** meaning that by his actions, he will know he is blessed by God, who has given him a good heart and the strength to fulfill the law. Hearing the law does not show you are blessed; but if you do it, your actions reveal that you are truly blessed and favored by God.

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## **CHAPTER 26: THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN TRUE FAITH AND INTELLECTUAL BELIEF**

### **Justified Faith Shows Itself Through Action**

**"Was not Abraham, our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?" (James 2:21)**

His action justified him before the world; it revealed and demonstrated the faith that both justified him before God and

empowered him to perform that remarkable act, as James also affirms.

**"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"  
(James 2:25)**

This justification was outward, before people; but before God, she was justified by faith, which produced that outward action, as you can see in **Joshua 2**. She had heard what God had done in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the desert, and to the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og. She confessed, saying, **"The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below."** She believed that God would give the land to the Israelites, as He had promised, and she agreed, submitting herself to God's will. She supported God's cause as best she could by helping and saving His spies and messengers.

The others feared what she believed but resisted God with all their strength and could not submit to His will.

**"By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." (Hebrews 11:31)**

Therefore, they perished, while she was saved—and saved through faith.

There, you see how the holy forefathers were saved through faith and how faith worked in them. Faith gives worth to all deeds done within God's law, making them good and glorious, no matter how lowly they may seem; while unbelief makes even the most impressive deeds worthless and condemnable.

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## **Faith and Works: A True Understanding of James's Teaching**

Regarding what James says in his second chapter:

**"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?" (James 2:14)**

and again:

**"Faith without works is dead." (James 2:20)**

**"Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 2:19),**

and:

**"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26)**

It is clear that he does not speak of the faith that Peter and Paul mention in their letters, that John speaks of in his gospel and first letter, or that Christ speaks of in the gospel when He says:

**"Your faith has saved you." (Luke 7:50)**

**"According to your faith let it be to you." (Matthew 9:29)**

or:

**"Great is your faith!" (Matthew 15:28)**

Nor does James speak of the faith he mentions in his first chapter, where he says:

**"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth."  
(James 1:18)**

or as Tyndale translated it in his Bible:

**"Of his awne will begat he vs with the worde of *lyfe* that we shuld be the fyrst frutes of his creatures." (James 1:18, TYN)**

Meaning that in believing the promises, which contain life, we are made true sons of God.

Paul says:

**"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14-15)**

I ask, when was it heard that God sent anyone to preach to the devils or that He made them any promises? He threatens them often, but He never sent ambassadors to offer them reconciliation.

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### **Faith and God's Promises: Two Examples to Clarify**

Here is an example to clarify: imagine two poor men, both lacking clothing in the cold of winter. One is strong enough to bear it without distress, while the other suffers greatly from the cold. Moved by pity, I say to the one in pain, **"Come to this place, and I will give you warm clothing."** He believes, comes, and receives what I promised. The other sees and knows all this but gains nothing, for he has no faith, since no promise was made to him.

So it is with the devils: they have no faith, for faith is the earnest belief in God's promises. The devils have no promises from God, only severe threats.

The old philosophers knew there was one God but had no faith, for they had no strength to seek His will or worship Him. Turks and

Saracens [*Muslims*] know there is one God, yet they have no faith, for they lack the power to worship God in spirit, to seek His pleasure, and to submit to His will. They have made an idol of God (as many of us do), worshiping Him each according to their imagination and for their own ends.

We want God to do our will, so we worship and pray to Him for our desires. But neither Turks nor Saracens, nor most of us, wish to do God's will. Whatever we think is righteous, we expect God to endorse; yet our hearts refuse to accept God's righteousness.

Here's another example: imagine the same two men, but I promise both of them. One, feeling his distress, comes, while the other, feeling no need, stays away. This is how God's promises work: they benefit only those sinners who recognize their sins, mourn over them, and repent wholeheartedly.

John the Baptist went before Christ, preaching repentance, which means he preached God's law correctly, leading people to understand themselves, fear God, and then seek Christ for healing. For in Christ, and for His sake alone, has God promised to show mercy, forgive us, and give us power to resist sin.

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### **Hollow Professions versus Genuine Faith in Christ's Promises**

How can God save you if you don't know your own damnation? How can Christ deliver you from sin if you won't acknowledge it? Consider how many thousands say, "**I believe Christ was born of a virgin, that He died, that He rose again,**" and yet you cannot convince them they have any sin at all! How many of the same sort refuse to believe that countless things are sinful, though God condemns them throughout Scripture—like buying as cheaply as possible while selling for as much

as possible, raising the price of grain and food for personal gain without regard for their neighbor, the poor, or the community?

Furthermore, how many hundreds of thousands, when they recognize their sins, place their trust in hollow rituals—the robe of a friar and his merits, the prayers of those who exploit widows and drive the poor from their homes and livelihoods, or in something from their own imagination, a foolish dream or false vision—rather than in Christ’s blood and the promises God has sworn?

These people are faithless, for they follow their own righteousness and are disobedient to God’s righteousness in every way. They reject the righteousness of God’s law, which condemns all our deeds (for even if some of them see their sins out of fear of punishment, they would prefer that these deeds were not sins at all).

They also reject the righteousness of God’s truth in His promises, by which He saves all who repent and believe. Though they believe Christ died, they do not believe He died for their sins or that His death fully satisfies their debt. They don’t believe God, for Christ’s sake, will be their Father and give them strength to resist sin.

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## **Faith that Obeys in Love**

Paul writes to the Church in Rome:

**"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)**

Meaning that if you believe He was raised for your salvation.

Many believe God is rich and almighty, but not that He is rich toward them personally—that He will be good to them, protect them, and be their God. Pharaoh, under the pressure of the plagues, was forced to confess his sins but had no power to submit to God’s will or to let the Israelites go and lose such great profit for God’s sake.

Our church leaders likewise confess their sins, saying, **“Though we are evil, we still have power.”** And again:

**“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”  
(Matthew 23:2-3)**

In this, they admit their corruption, but I respond: if they sat in Christ’s seat, they would preach His doctrine. Instead, they preach their own traditions and therefore are not to be heeded. If they preached Christ, we should listen to them, no matter how corrupt they are, as they themselves admit.

Yet they have no power to change, nor to release Christ’s flock to serve God in spirit, which they hold captive, forcing them to serve lies.

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## **False Faith in Religious Authorities**

The devils felt Christ’s power and were forced, against their will, to confess Him as the Son of God, yet had no power to accept it or to submit to the eternal counsel of the Almighty. Our church leaders likewise feel God’s power against them but lack the grace to yield to Christ, for they, like the devils, wish to sit in His holy temple, the consciences of men.

*[In context, Tyndale is speaking of the Roman Catholic church leaders.]*

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## **Simon Magus: False Faith**

Simon Magus believed, as we read in **Acts 8**, with a faith like that of the devils who acknowledged Christ. Yet he lacked true faith, as is evident in that same chapter. He did not repent or consent to the law of God, nor did he believe in or long for God's promises; rather, he was merely amazed by the miracles performed by Philip.

Finding himself powerless in Philip's presence, unable to use his sorcery and magic arts to deceive the people as he had before, he tried to buy the gift of God in order to sell it for profit—just as his successors do today, who are not the successors of Simon Peter. For if they were Simon Peter's successors, they would preach Christ, as he did. Instead, they are the successors of Simon Magus, as Simon Peter himself warned in **2 Peter 2:1**:

**" But there were also false prophets among the people" (referring to the Jews), " even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies (sects)" (sects here meaning factions, as one follows Francis, another Dominic, something Paul also condemned in **1 Corinthians 1 and 3**), "even denying the Lord who bought them" (for they reject salvation through Christ and prevent anyone from preaching Him to others). " And many will follow their destructive ways."**

*[Tyndale's translation reads:*

*Ther were falce prophetes amonge the people even as ther shalbe falce teachers amonge you: wiche prevely shall brynge in damnable **sectes** even denyinge the Lorde that hath bought them and brynge vpon them selues swyft damnacion and many shall folowe their damnable wayes by which the waye of trueth shalbe evyll spoken of. (2 Peter 2:1-2, TYN)]*



You may ask, "Would God allow so many to stray for so long?" I answer: many must follow their destructive ways, or else Peter would be a false prophet.

**"Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" (2 Peter 2:2),**

as it is now, where preaching the truth is considered heresy.

Their greed and corrupt dealings are plain to see, even to the blind.

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### **True Faith and Dead Belief**

Thus, when James says, **"Faith without works is dead," "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead,"** and **"the devils believe,"** it is clear he does not refer to the faith and trust we have in God's promises and His holy covenant made with us through Christ's blood. This faith comes after repentance and a heartfelt consent to God's law, saving a person and reconciling them to God.

Instead, James speaks of a false belief or opinion held by some who say, **"I believe that Christ was born of a virgin, that He died,"** and so forth. They believe this so strongly that they are ready to kill anyone who says otherwise. But they do not believe that Christ died for their sins, that His death has satisfied God's wrath, and that it has secured for them all that God has promised in the Scriptures.

For how can they believe that Christ died for their sins and that He is their only and sufficient Savior when they look for other saviors of their own imagination and invention? And how can they believe in Christ's saving power if they feel no awareness of their sins, no true repentance—except, perhaps, a superficial repentance driven by fear

of punishment rather than love for God's law or desire for the promises He has made through Christ's blood?

If they truly repented, loved God's law, and longed for the help God has promised to all who call upon Him in Christ's name, then God's truth would surely grant them the strength to do good works whenever the opportunity arose—otherwise, God would be false. But, as Scripture says:

**"Let God be true, but every man a liar." (Romans 3:4)**

For God's truth endures forever. To Him alone be all honor and glory forever. Amen.

The End.

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## **ABOUT THE EDITOR: A JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION**

### **Introduction**

Hi, I'm Todd Sumrall, and it has been my honor and privilege to update this timeless work of William Tyndale's *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*.

The title Tyndale chose for this work, in my opinion, is unfortunate because it doesn't fully capture the essence of the writing. If I were to give it a title, I would probably use *The Christian's Relationship With Grace, Works, and the Law*.

In the [Preface](#), I briefly described my motivation for taking on this project to update Tyndale's work in modern English, so I will leave it to the reader to explore that if they wish to know why I updated this

work. Here, I want to share a little bit about myself, with the hope that God receives glory from my story.

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## **My Story**

It was the first week of December 2020, and we were nearing the end of the first year of COVID-19. Like much of the world, I was isolated. I was living alone, and struggling. Each morning, I woke up trembling from alcohol withdrawal. My body was failing—I had been bleeding internally for some time. Every trip to the bathroom left the toilet bowl bright red with blood.

My mornings began with alcohol as my "**breakfast**," just to stop the shakes and numb the horrible symptoms that addiction inflicts on the body. It was a dark and desperate time in my life.

I knew I was worthy of death. I knew I was worthy of God's judgment. I knew I was worthy of hell and that God would be justified if He cut me off from His presence for eternity. With that knowledge, I prayed, **"God, before You kill me, make me Yours again."**

That was it. I didn't care if He ended my life; I just wanted to belong to Him again.

God showed up in my apartment that day. He made me His again. I had expected a couple of weeks of brutal withdrawal symptoms, but after just two difficult days, they were completely gone.

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## God's Mercy and Healing

Back in 2019, when I had my last physical at the VA clinic before COVID, my doctor told me with all seriousness that I needed to get my house in order because I wouldn't be alive much longer. Alcohol and drugs had wrecked my body.

In 2021, when I was finally able to get another physical (the VA clinic wasn't scheduling visits during 2020), my doctor was stunned by the results of my blood work. He initially thought he had received the wrong person's lab results.

- Where I had once been diabetic, the blood work now showed no signs of diabetes.
- Where my liver enzymes had been so elevated that my liver was on the brink of shutting down, they were now normal.
- Where my blood sugar levels had been dangerously high—what he called “death territory”—they were now normal.
- My blood pressure, which had hovered around 170/130 even with medication, now stayed around 125/70.

Today, I still take blood pressure medication occasionally, but I no longer need it regularly.

My doctor was puzzled and amazed. He asked me, **“What changed? What happened?”**

I answered with one word: **“Jesus.”**

At that moment, I learned that he, too, was a believer in Jesus, and he immediately understood. I still have copies of my medical records—before and after—should God ever want to use them for His glory.

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## Jesus Found Me

God showed me great mercy. As I mentioned above, all I wanted was to belong to Him again.

I know some of my Reformed brethren may take issue with what I am about to say, but I can only speak of what God has done for me and in me. Just as Jesus told the demoniac, **“Go back home and tell the people what God has done for you and the great mercy He has shown you,”** I know Jesus wants the same from me.

As of this writing, November 2024, at the age of 59, and by God’s grace—and this is not a cliché—I have been serving God. I have set my heart to seek Him, to know Him, and to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ by Him.

This has not always been the case.

As a child, something happened to me when I was in fifth grade. A darkness—an evil—took over my life. This was during the time my parents were going through a divorce. I became an extremely hateful child, full of anger and rage. My mom made me go to church, and I hated both her and God for it. I wanted her dead. I could have easily become a **“Columbine kid,”** but God, in His mercy, never allowed that to happen.

Fast forward to the age of 16: I was consumed by hatred and so opposed to going to church that when I told my mom and stepdad I was leaving, they let me go without a fuss. I had wreaked havoc in the household and created an atmosphere of fear.

At that point, I was enslaved to the drug and rock-and-roll culture and already an alcoholic. I became addicted to alcohol at the age of 14 when I had my first drink. By 16, I had received my first DUI (the first of 9 that would follow) after wrecking my car in the high school parking lot.

I left home and moved in with a friend and his parents for a few months. Eventually, they grew tired of me, and I had to leave. I moved in with another friend, but her parents weren't happy about the arrangement, and I was soon about to get the boot again.

This was just before Christmas. I knew I couldn't go home because of everything I had done. Strangely enough, during this time, I managed to stay in school!

About a week before Christmas, my mom somehow tracked me down and came to where I was staying. She asked me if I wanted to come home. I said yes. Her one condition was that I had to go to church. I agreed, but I made it a point to get high every time before going to church.

Not long after, shortly after I turned 17, while high in church, the Holy Spirit got hold of me. I broke down, crying like a baby. I can't tell you what was preached that day, but I'll never forget what happened next.

My stepfather—the same man I had once threatened so severely that he locked his bedroom door at night and slept with a pistol—put his hand on my shoulder and said, **“I'll walk with you to the altar.”**

I boo-hoo'ed and wept uncontrollably at that altar. I saw my great sin, and I saw Jesus' great mercy on the cross.

When it was over, I knew something had changed inside of me. I was born again.

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### **A Life Patterned after the Book of Judges**

Though the transformation at 17 was radical, I later fell into a cycle of backsliding, much like the Israelites in the book of Judges. I repeatedly cried out to God for help in times of trouble but returned to my old ways when life improved.

Yet through it all, God remained faithful.

That anger, that hate, that rage—it was gone in an instant. Only once since then has that same hate tried to creep back into my life. It was during a dark period when my first marriage (the first of three failed marriages) ended in disaster, and my wife left me for another man.

The day I found out my wife had left me for another man I collapsed on the kitchen floor and shouted at God, **“I am not Job!”**. What transpired after that is a darkness that I cannot even begin to explain. I had murder in my heart for my ex-wife.

Even then, God didn’t allow that hate to take hold for long. He arrested it, and it didn’t stick around. In fact, God not only arrested the hate, but He also arrested me—literally. At that time, I was 24 years old and ended up in prison for a DUI, my fourth or fifth one (of what would eventually total nine across three states).

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## **What Happened?**

So, what happened? You might ask, **“I thought you got born again at 17?”**

Let’s revisit that. The transformation that happened when I was 17 can only be described as radical. I wanted all my friends—and even my stepsister from my father’s second marriage—to know Jesus. I filled the church pews with druggies!

Two of them met Jesus. As far as I know, one is still faithfully serving Him, and the other, God has not let go of yet. In addition, my stepsister met Jesus later and is still walking with Him to this day.

## **The Radical Change and the Fall**

The change in me was so extreme that I read my Bible from cover to cover in just 30 days. I could hardly sleep because of the overwhelming desire I had to read it. Then, I read it again in about 90 days.

During this time, God instilled His fear in me. The Old Testament terrified me.

Later that summer, David Wilkerson held a crusade in New York City. Accompanying him were two prominent figures—former gang members Nicky Cruz and Israel Narvaez—featured in his book *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Having read that book, I was inspired and wanted to be part of the crusade. So, I went—with the blessing of my church and my parents.

On the Greyhound bus ride home, there were two guys with marijuana. I ended up getting high.



When I returned home and went to church that Sunday, the pastor asked me to give a testimony. At that time, I was so afraid of God because of what I had done on that bus that I couldn't bring myself to share a testimony. Instead, I stood in front of the church and confessed what I had done on the bus ride home.

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### **In the Wilderness for 40 Years**

This is just a snapshot of how my life would be for the next 40 years. I was consumed by lust for women and a constant desire to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

From all outward appearances, I was like the person Jesus described as seed that fell on stony ground: when temptation arises, that person quickly falls away. This was absolutely true of me.

But I know I was born again. There was no denying what happened inside of me that day at the altar.

I wasn't deceived into thinking everything was OK between me and God. I believed His Word—all of it.

Paul said that those who live the way I was living would not inherit the kingdom of God. Period. Full stop.

I knew that if God allowed me to die, I would go to hell.

During this time, in my moments of deep reflection, I felt that my heart was too hardened to repent and that I would never be able to turn back. Yet, I still hoped that somehow God would step in and do

something to lead me to repentance before I died and ended up in hell.

I spent the next 40 years, from age 17 to 53, using God in the same way the children of Israel did in the *Book of Judges*. I treated Him as a **“fire-escape”** God. The amazing thing is, just as He allowed it during the time of the Judges, He let me use Him that way too.

Oh, I was sincere at the time, just as they were, but when things settled down and life improved, I went back to my old ways—only to face the same disastrous results. Then I would cry out to God, and He would deliver me, only for the cycle to repeat.

It was a horrible merry-go-round I was on. I remember a pastor once asked me, **“When are you going to quit marching around Mount Sinai?”** Those words never left me because they were true.

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## **The Great Shepherd and the Dream**

When the Great Shepherd brought me back in 2020, He began to reveal the truth of those words to me. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

Shortly after meeting Jesus at 17, He appeared to me in a dream. I am hesitant to share this because of the many false prophets and apostles that have infiltrated the American church today, claiming dreams and visions they believe are from God—but they are not.

However, I have had a few dreams from the Lord, and I am going to share this one.

Jesus appeared to me in a dream one night. He was suspended between the sky and the earth. His face shone so brightly that I could not see it, but I could see the rest of His body clothed in white raiment (I don't know of another way to describe the clothing). His hands were extended toward me, palms open, and He said, **"I will never leave you or forsake you."**

That was it. That was the dream.

I look back now and can see that even though I had been so grotesquely unfaithful toward Him, He remained faithful to what He said in that dream.

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## **I Should Have Died**

I can recall five distinct occasions when my life should have ended—two before I was born again and three afterward. The three that occurred after I was born again included two very serious car wrecks and one incident where someone pulled a pistol and shoved it into my neck. As for the two that happened before, one involved a fight, and the other, as you'll see below, is almost unbelievable.

This story is a strange one, I will admit. My friends and I had been at the beach drinking. There were five of us in the car. I was driving. The three in the back were unaware of what occurred, but those of us in the front saw it all. We were driving around 60 mph on a curve when a car, speeding even faster, came into our lane while passing another vehicle in the curve. There was no time to react.

Somehow, my car was lifted off the ground and moved sideways, straddling the road and the dirt. It didn't flip. I thought Miguel, my

passenger, had grabbed the steering wheel to avoid the collision. I thanked him for it, but he said, **“It wasn’t me. The car just lifted and moved sideways.”**

This all happened so quickly that I couldn’t process what had actually occurred. Miguel still talks about that event to this day. He is also one of the people I mentioned earlier who came to know Jesus. Although he has no apparent walk with the Lord at this time, God has not let him go.

I know this because I saw him recently, and sure enough, he brought up that miraculous event again. Miguel said something very telling that day, a clear sign that God’s hand is still on him. He said, **“God spared our lives that day for a reason.”**

I said all of that to say this: those are the five times I am aware of when I should have died. Three of them happened after I became born again.

Jesus stayed true to His word in that dream: **“He never left me or forsook me,”** even though, by all accounts, He should have, because I was a very wicked person.

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## **To My Reformed Brethren**

That is part of my story. I’ll leave it to my Reformed brethren to grapple with the truth that when God chooses someone, He does not change His mind. The story of the wilderness, the book of Judges, and all throughout the Bible has always been this: If we are His people

and we do evil, He will punish us, but He will not give us over to the destruction we deserve.

Yes, I have wrestled with those passages that say a person can never **“be renewed to repentance,”** or the warnings about the **“pig returning to the mud”** and the **“dog returning to its vomit.”**

Many times during my backslidings, I was as Hosea described: **“a backsliding heifer.”** Or like the donkey in Jeremiah, **“sniffing around for pleasure,”** or the horse **“neighing after their neighbor’s wife.”** Worst of all, my actions would have made Oholah blush because, like Oholibah, I went beyond in my perversions as described in Ezekiel.

**What is true about all those descriptions is God was describing His people, not those outside of covenant.** The message from Genesis to Revelation never changes. God says, **“Repent and return to Me.”** That offer from God is available as long as we are not six feet under, pushing up daisies.

***How many times has Jesus asked the Father to let Him dig around me and fertilize, so that perhaps next year there will be the fruit He seeks? It must have been many times. Only He knows how often He has made that request.***

I don’t want to attempt a full theological explanation of this, but I believe all of God’s Word. A backslider who dies without repentance can—and probably will—have their name removed from the *Book of Life*. Otherwise, how could a name be removed out if it were never there to begin with? **(Revelation 3:5; 22:19)**

God illustrates His *Book of Life* and the concept of being removed from it in the *Torah*—the first five books of the Bible—when He states

that certain actions will result in a person being removed from the roles of the Israelite nation. The phrase used is **“cut off from the people”** or **“their soul will be cut off from the people”** (Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 7:21, and elsewhere).

However, as long as it is still called **“today,”** and they are not **“pushing up daisies,”** a backslider can return to God—if and when God intervenes.

**All of this is a mystery, and only God knows it fully. So, I will leave it at that.**

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### **Though You Slay Me, Yet Will I Trust You**

When my first wife left me for another man, I collapsed on the kitchen floor and shouted at God, **“I am not Job!”** I was heartbroken, and the years that followed felt like a long, weary march around Mount Sinai.

When God showed up in my apartment that day in 2020, my prayer began with, **“Before You kill me, make me Yours again,”** and ended like Job’s declaration: **“Though You slay me, yet will I trust You.”**

**God had brought me full circle from that day on the kitchen floor.**

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### **Where I’m Am Today**

Currently, for the last four years, I have been in a **“spiritual Arabia,”** much like the Apostle Paul, getting to know my God and my Savior, Jesus Christ. When opportunities to share the gospel arise, I share the

gospel. When opportunities to do good for someone present themselves, I do good.

My life is pretty simple. I want to serve God in whatever capacity He has determined for me before the world was ever created.

That said, I do have a YouTube channel “[Blood Covenant](https://www.youtube.com/c/BloodCovenant)” (<https://www.youtube.com/c/BloodCovenant>) dedicated to the glory of God. On it, I share what God is revealing to me.

I have a heart for backsliders and long to see them return to God. Some of the more popular videos on the channel include my testimony and messages specifically aimed at backsliders. God has opened the door with some of those backsliders to communicate with and share his word and ways.

I also have a church fellowship. I have a strong desire to stimulate the spiritual taste buds of those who name the name of Christ so they can **see the glory of God and truly taste and see that He is good!**

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## **Acknowledgments and Recommendations**

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge or recommend some people who have had a tremendous impact on my life outside of my mom and my stepdad. My stepdad has since gone to be with the Lord.

### **John Piper**

John Piper once said that every Christian should have some spiritual heroes, dead or alive, outside of the Bible. He is certainly one of mine.

John Piper has shown me more of the glory of God in God's Word than any other preacher I have ever encountered. He is a Baptist preacher who calls himself a Reformed preacher, but he is like no other Reformed preacher I have ever heard. God has revealed to Mr. Piper a bigger picture of His glory—beyond the theological box most Reformed preachers seem to live in.

It's hard to explain, but perhaps Piper is more **"BaptiCostal"** than Reformed. Who knows? Pentecostals have their own theological boxes, so that may not be an accurate description either.

Just a few days before God and I had that encounter in my apartment in December 2020, I saw a YouTube ad. It was a full segment of a teaching by John Piper on Ephesians 2, focusing on the first few verses. These verses explain how we are dead in our trespasses and sins and how God, purely because of His grace and simply because He wants to, steps in and makes us alive in Christ. That video captured my full attention.

Before then, I didn't know who John Piper was. Since then, I've been a student of his teachings, especially through his ***"Look at the Book"*** series. Piper has a way of making Scripture understandable like no one else, and he draws out the glory of God from the text.

As a bonus, I've also learned how to better read and study the Bible by watching how he approaches Scripture in this series. John Piper leads the ministry [\*Desiring God\*](#) and hosts the ***Look at the Book*** series on [YouTube](#), along with many other preaching and teaching videos. I highly recommend checking them out.

**William Tyndale**



John Piper is my living spiritual hero, but I also have two deceased heroes. The first, as you might guess from this book, is William Tyndale.

Through this book, Tyndale has revealed the glory of God in His law in ways I had never seen before. I don't need to recommend this book—you already have it!

This book has been an answer to prayer. For a long time, I knew I was missing the truth about the relationship between grace, works, and the law. Have you ever taken time to consider how many times the law is brought up in the New Testament?

American preachers don't seem to fully grasp or teach about this vital relationship. Tyndale, however, spells it out in a magnificent, God-glorifying way in this book.

I thank God for giving me the gift of Tyndale's writing.

However, if you skipped the [Preface](#), I recommend a biography written by David Teems, simply titled [Tyndale which can be purchased on Amazon](#). Teems writes in such a way that you feel transported to Tyndale's time in history. By the end of the book, it feels as though you personally know William Tyndale.

## **John Bunyan**

Finally, for my last hero, I almost don't have the words to describe the impact he has had on me. That would be John Bunyan, author of [Pilgrim's Progress](#) and [The Holy War](#).

*The Holy War* best explains my journey from a spiritual perspective. It is an amazing book that portrays the conflict between Diabolus and Mansoul, as well as Mansoul's El Shaddai, Prince Emmanuel, and

others. The descriptions of spiritual realities in this book are unparalleled—in my opinion, even more so than in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

These two books open up the spiritual world in ways unlike anything else. I read both books at least once a year and highly recommend that you read them at least once. Updated, modern English versions of both are available on Amazon, and I own copies of them myself.

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May God bless and comfort each of His own with grace and peace, and may He give hope through His mighty power—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ. To them be glory forever and ever. Amen.