
C. L. “Vern” Wilson

Theme:

ORDEALS AND SECURITY:
HOW CAN WE COPE?

Why Must we BE IN Christ for the Assurances of “ <i>Salvation Security?</i> ”	2
Evil, Suffering, Death: WHY?	6
“I Just Want to Know ‘WHY IT HAPPENED’”	12
Why Must we BE IN Christ FOR “ <i>Eternal Security?</i> ”	17
What IS “ <i>The Will of God?</i> ”	21
Some Things Are Beyond Human Comprehension	29
Why Must we BE IN Christ FOR “Physical Security?”	35

“WHY MUST WE BE IN CHRIST FOR THE ASSURANCES OF “SALVATION SECURITY?”

Eph.1:1-14

INTRODUCTION:

[Read text.] “IN HIM” is **suggestive** of a relationship which can be sustained with Christ! There are three terms denoting our kinship with Jesus: **“WITHOUT CHRIST”**, **“IN CHRIST”**, & **“WITH CHRIST”**! At the conclusion of this lesson I would hope for two things to be clear in our understanding: (1) We CAN sustain a relationship with God through His Only Begotten Son! and, (2) The importance of that relationship is seen in that we **MUST** be involved **IN IT** in order to have the security of salvation from our past sins!

Can you understand what someone means when commenting on the harsh reality of a sad event, and says, “They were just in the WRONG place at the WRONG time?”

I. THE ONLY TIME ANYONE ON EARTH HAS BEEN SAVED FROM THE GUILT OF SINS IS BY BEING IN [the RIGHT place at the RIGHT time -- Can you understand that?] A GOD-ORDAINED-PLACE AT A GOD-APPOINTED-TIME! Rom.15:4; 1 Cor.10:11.

- A. Our first citation establishing this point regards Noah and the rest of the world at the time of the Great Flood. **Gen.6:14, 18-** *“Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.” -- “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”*
1. Noah spent many years preaching of God’s impending wrath and how man could be saved!
 2. But the only ones he was able to save from the flood was his own immediate family!
 3. He was pleasing and acceptable to God because **he obeyed ALL** God wanted him to do!
Gen.6:22- *“Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.”*
 4. Regardless of the thousands or MILLIONS alive at the time, the **only ones who were saved** were those **IN** the ark [*the G.O.P.*] **WHEN God shut that one door [G.A.T.]**
- B. Abraham, the **“Father of the faithful,”** had to be **IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME** to be obedient to God in offering Isaac. All kinds of things might be suggested if he’d been somewhere else: 1) May not have found a ram caught in the thicket; 2) If he’d been disobeying, God likely would not have stayed his hand; 3) CERTAINLY wouldn’t have been counted “faithful!”
- C. Finally, look at Israel in bondage as slaves in Egypt, under the hand of the heavy task-masters and longing for deliverance from this traumatic ordeal!
1. God called Moses to deliver His people. God’s power was demonstrated in the 10 plagues!
 2. I believe it’s notable that each of the plagues were directed at the power point of some of the gods of the Egyptians, **to establish that they could not withstand the God of the Hebrews.**
 3. The last plague, the death of the firstborn, was a precisely given plan for God’s greatest presentation of evidence that HE, and only HE, was God of the universe.
 4. And only those firstborn ones who were in the **G.O.P** at the **G.A.T.** escaped that angel of death!
 - a) The Egyptians had neither **information about** nor **sanctuary from** the wrath of God, and **only SOME OF THE HEBREW CHILDREN DID!**
 - b) **SOME of the Hebrews knew SALVATION** on that occasion only because they were in the **G.O.P.** [*inside a house marked by the blood of a lamb*] at the **G.A.T.** [*When the messenger of death traversed that land!*]
- D. We could also consider Adam & Eve and the first recorded response of obedience to God in **IN THE GARDEN** but also **AWAY FROM** the **TREE OF KNOWLEDGE**, and the **TIME** element with them

was at the temptation of Satan!! Rahab & her family on the wall of Jericho; Cities of Refuge; Going to Jerusalem three times a year; et al!

- E. All of these places that guaranteed the Lord's salvation are PHYSICAL LOCATIONS! **I now want you to consider and recognize** that the topic of our lesson today is ALSO the place for the Lord's salvation, but it is a SPIRITUAL LOCATION that is **initiated** and **sustained** BY RELATIONSHIP!

First, please note that in GOD'S ORDAINED PLACE [RELATIONSHIP through His Son] there are priceless & sustaining benefits, because---

II. **ONLY "IN CHRIST":**

- A. **CAN WE BE TRULY DEFICIENT OF SPIRITUAL CONDEMNATION!** **Rom.8:1-4-** *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*
1. **OUTSIDE** of Jesus Christ ... men are lost and condemned, even though they may be considered **morally upright**, and **upstanding citizens** of the community, and even **quality parents** in providing needs for this earthly life!
 2. BUT it is only IN CHRIST that we're in the **G.O.P** at the **G.A.T.**
- B. **OIC CAN WE BE THE NEW CREATURES [NEW CREATION] IN THE FAMILY OF GOD!!** **2 Cor.5:17.**
1. **New creatures in Christ are BORN AGAIN CREATURES!** **Jno.3:3-5.**
 2. Everything about us has to change in order to be New Creatures ... and it's **ONLY THEN** we can be in the **G.O.P** at the **G.A.T.** **Col.3:9-10-** *"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him"*
- C. **OIC ARE WE TO BE IDENTIFIED AS THE CHOSEN OF GOD!** **Eph.1:4-** *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love"*
1. Being "**CHOSEN**" by the Lord is the same thing as being **ELECTED** by Him! **Mk.13:27-** *"And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His **ELECT** from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven."*
 2. Those who teach that there's election and predestination without any effort put forth by man are teaching **CALVINISM**, and **not Christianity!**
 3. In order to be the "**elected**" or the "**chosen**" **ONES**, we must **GET INTO CHRIST!** **THAT'S** the only way ANYONE can be in the **G.O.P.** at the **G.A.T.**
- D. **OIC CAN WE BE THE RECIPIENTS OF TRUE REDEMPTION -- THAT WHICH IS OF GOD!** **Eph.1:7;** **Rom.1:16.**
1. "**REDEMPTION**" is the **ONLY PROCESS** that, in the MIND of God, **DELIVERS** one from slavery in sin!
 2. It is the **ONLY WAY** we are REBORN [*bought back into a condition of being SPIRITUALLY ALIVE!*]
 3. And the **ONLY WAY** we can HAVE this redemption is by BEING in the **GOP** at the **GAT!**
- E. **OIC CAN WE ACTUALLY AND WITH REALITY RECEIVE THE INHERITANCE PROMISED BY GOD!** **Rom.8:16-17-** *"The spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit.."* **Eph.1:11-** *"also **we have obtained an inheritance**, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"*
1. What IS that inheritance? It's that promised treasure that's held in heaven for us --- **eternal recognition and identification as the Lord's people!** **1 Pet.1:4-** *"to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,"* **Acts 20:32.**

2. And that inheritance CANNOT BE OURS if we're NOT in the **right place at the right time!**

F. **OIC CAN WE BE THE TRUE RECIPIENTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD!** **Eph.1:13-** *"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,"*

1. People often talk of strange "*feelings*", or "*experiences of grace*", or of "*getting the H.S.*", or of "*praying for the Holy Spirit*" in order to receive the salvation of the Lord's! Anyone who talks like that is just **DELUDED** about what the Bible teaches concerning the H.S.
2. The H.S. is a "granting" the Lord makes **ONLY** to those who are **IN CHRIST!** It is our identity as His people, His family! **And we can't be HIS FAMILY if we DON'T OBTAIN THE Holy Spirit!**
3. **Rom.8:9-** *"But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him!"* It DEFINITELY depends on our being in the **G.O.P.** at the **G.A.T.**

G. **OIC ARE WE TRULY ABLE TO BE RECONCILED [BOUGHT BACK AGAIN] TO GOD!** **Isa.59:1-2;** **Col.1:21-23-** *"And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." 2* **Cor.5:18-19-** *"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."*

1. A sinner [someone living a life **in the WORLD**] is an "ALIEN", or an **ENEMY** to God! **Jas.4:4.**
2. We can become a "FRIEND" of God's **ONLY by reconciliation** [by being brought back together with Him!]
3. All the morality in the world, or citizenship in one of the best or richest countries will not bring reconciliation to God! **SO LONG AS we're NOT IN CHRIST, we're enemies of God!**
4. To be reconciled to God, must be in the **G.O.P.** at the **G.A.T.**

H. **OIC CAN WE HAVE HEAVENLY ASSURANCE OF GOD'S SALVATION!** **1 Tim.1:15;** **2 Tim.2:10.**

1. We CANNOT have these things simply because we may be good neighbors, or because we vote Republican or Democrat, or because we're Americans, or Northern Californians!
2. God's saving us is, definitively, a result of our being where HE has placed that salvation!
 - a) And the **ONLY** assurance He has **EVER GIVEN** is that salvation is **IN ZION, IN CHRIST, IN THE BODY OF CHRIST!**
 - b) I believe the prophets even spoke of that security we can have **only in CHRIST!** **Zech.14:9-11-** *"And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. 10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. 11 And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem [or, those who are in ZION, vis, SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM] will dwell in security."*

III. THE BIGGEST QUESTION OF OUR LIVES -- TODAY, AND FOR ALL TIME -- BECOMES: HOW CAN WE GET INTO CHRIST?

A. All living creatures can enjoy the **physical** blessings of the Lord, *under given circumstances*, but **ONLY THOSE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST CAN be**

saved from past sins, have the promise/hope of eternal life, and enjoy those SPIRITUAL blessings that are only to be found IN CHRIST!

1. Our SALVATION, that is, our ENTRANCE INTO CHRIST [where salvation is] comes by the GRACE of God [**Eph.2:8**], but it comes on the avenue of our FAITH and OBEDIENCE!
 - a) **Gal.3:26-27**. The Greek word “*gar*” [“FOR”] introduces an explanation, or a reason for the statement that’s just been made!
 - b) FAITH by itself won’t save anyone! BAPTISM alone won’t save us either!
 - c) In order to get into Christ ***must*** BELIEVE, but also ***must*** REPENT, and those actions of God’s righteousness ***must*** be coupled with BAPTISM in water for the remission of sins!
 2. It has been aptly stated that GRACE is God’s part in our salvation and FAITH is man’s part!
- B. Does this begin to answer for you the question: “Why, then, is EVERYONE not in Christ? Or, more bluntly, “Why isn’t EVERYONE SAVED?”
1. JUST AS BLUNTLY, may I answer you with: “It’s because everyone hasn’t made an **ACTIVE CHOICE** to be saved, or to be **IN CHRIST!**”
 2. By choosing to NOT be in Christ, or even by MAKING NO CHOICE, we are derelict in our responsibility to CHOOSE HIM, so Christ says we are AGAINST HIM! **Matt.12:30**

CONCLUSION:

How many here BELIEVE? Presume all do.... Ready to repent? Ready to confess your faith in Christ? Ready to be baptized for the remission of your sins? Kind of difficult to make a decision like that very quickly, isn’t it? Let me ask you THIS ONE for a quick decision: **ARE YOU READY TO BE IN CHRIST? *To be in Christ is equal to being IN HIS CHURCH!* Eph.1:22-23. *Are you IN CHRIST right now?* Really need to be, because being IN CHRIST is the **GOD ORDAINED PLACE** and right now is the **GOD APPOINTED TIME!** Mainly, because RIGHT NOW is the only TIME you’re promised. **2 Cor.6:2-**”*Now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation!*”**

"Evil ... Suffering ... Death: WHY?"

INTRODUCTION:

Paul endured trials in this life and then died a martyr, still anticipating his reward. Job endured trials in this life, but then received an ideal reward while he was still alive. **So, WHAT, EXACTLY, can we expect from God?** Perhaps the best way to view the ending of Job is not to see it as a blueprint for what will happen to us in this life, but as being significant of what God has prepared for those who endure! So, let me state from the very outset that *faithfulness to God, by our striving to live in keeping with His will, is not going to guarantee for us every physical blessing or that there will never be any conflict or adversity!* We need to see from the beginning of this study that the ultimate mortality rate is the same for atheists and saints alike! **All of us die!** And the route to that point can be a real ordeal for us all --- except for the strength we derive from and the confidence we place in the Lord!

I. EVIL, SUFFERING AND DEATH ARE REAL PROBLEMS FOR US ALL!

A. What about the problem of EVIL?

1. The presence of "evil" in a world pronounced "very good" by its Creator has always presented a challenge to rational, spiritual people.
 - a) The OT word [Hebrew *ra'*] refers to those things which may be physically undesirable, "**BAD**" in our estimation, such as disease, calamity, and destruction from such forces as tornados, earthquakes, et al, the causes of which are generally not fully understood.
 - b) The word also refers to that which is morally wicked or sinful in the sight of God. In fact, the last six commandments of the decalogue relate to moral behavior and any violations of them constitute moral evils, or sins!
 - c) The NT word [Greek- *poneros, poneria, and kakos*] usually refers to moral evil, that is, SIN, disobedience to God, with predictable results.
2. How can the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent God be reconciled with the fact of so much evil and misery in the world He is supposed to have created?
 - a) Such negative things as animal pain, human suffering, and man's inhumanity to man are held to be incompatible with the existence of a just, merciful and powerful deity.
 - b) Some 300 years before Christ, EPICURUS gave this problem its classical philosophic formulation: *"If God wants to prevent evil but cannot, he is not omnipotent; if he is powerful enough to prevent evil but will not, he is not benevolent; if he neither can nor desires to prevent evil, there is no good reason to think of him as 'divine' at all; if he both can and wishes to prevent evil, there is no way to account for its presence in our experience; thus, since evil clearly does exist, we must conclude that no omnipotent and omnibenevolent God exists!"* In recent years the thoughts have been given wider circulation by writers like Harold S. Kushner in books like "When Bad Things Happen to Good People".
3. MORAL EVIL is a result of turning against the will of God, and is much easier to explain than "evils" in the natural world.
 - a) "GOOD AND EVIL" were set side by side before Adam in the garden when God placed the *"tree of knowledge of good and evil"* there with the instruction that he was not to eat of it! Gen.2:9, 17. It was for the purpose of allowing the exercise of his free will as well as testing his loyalty to God.
 - b) He was **not TEMPTED by God**, because *"God cannot be tempted with evil, and He himself tempteth no man"* - James 1:13. The **TEMPTATION to sin**, or to commit moral evil, came from a different source, Satan, who appeared in the form of a serpent!
4. C. J. Ducasse in A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion suggests that there are four classes of evil.

- a) *Physical* - diseases or pain associated with the human body and its limitations and the forces in the natural universe.
 - b) *Psychological* - all the states of mind that create suffering such as loneliness, anxiety, fear, and rejection.
 - c) *Moral* - all those negative character traits such as selfishness, greed, malice, hatred, and cruelty.
 - d) *Intellectual* - including irrational behavior, bad judgment, and stupidity.
- B. What are some of the **RESULTS of evil**? Though the world was created by a loving God, the problems brought on by evil are REAL, and the results are ABUNDANT, but at this time we shall only consider a couple!
1. Evil brings about suffering and death, to both the righteous and the wicked.
 - a) As we shall consider later, **evil is not the only source** of suffering and death, but has certainly had a big part in it, from the very foundation of the world!
 - b) Most of us can "*understand*" the suffering of sinners [*"They deserve it!"*], but it's just really difficult to understand why righteous Abel had to suffer, because he was urgently striving to be well-pleasing to God! **More on this when we discuss the sources of adversity!**
[Tomorrow]
 2. In **Matthew 6:19-34**, Jesus impresses God's concern for our well-being on our thinking by assuring people that they need not be *anxious*, or *worry*, so long as they're holding on to the Lord. So, one of the **results** of evil is to exercise "natural" tendencies that show a distrust or a lack of confidence in God!
 - a) The noun *merimna* means **anxiety, worry, or care**. In explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said of that which was sown among the thorns, "*This is he that heareth the word, and the care of the world ... chokes out the word!*" Anxieties or worries of the world and of life choke out the word so that the individual fails to develop fully as a Christian!
 - b) The verb *merimnao* means to **have anxiety, to be anxious, or to be unduly concerned**. This word, occurring six times in the citation, shows that Jesus is mindful of the disciples' worry about matters of everyday life and points them to the Father who makes provision for all their necessities.
 - c) Jesus begins with the command, "*Be not anxious*", then specifies what they're to not worry about. Those things which most distract us are things that pertain to the physical life --- food, drink, raiment, social obligations, and the like!
 3. **Another perplexing question that compounds our confusion is NOT ONLY why do the righteous SUFFER, but why do the evil seem to PROSPER?**
- C. Now, what about the problems of **SUFFERING** and **DEATH**?
1. They are real problems and, as we just noted, seem to be **primarily** the results of EVIL, though, again, evil is NOT THE ONLY CAUSE!
 - a) Death and suffering should NEITHER be regarded as *intrinsically evil* intruders!
 - b) SIN, moral evil that results from the abuse of freedom [*our own free will*], **is the only intrinsic evil in human experience!**
 2. Regardless of all that, DEATH IS REAL! Its *outward symbols* are well known to all of us! A *cemetery* is not hard to detect! A *hearse* is rarely confused with any other vehicle! A *coffin* is like no other box!
 - a) These outward signs tell us we're in the presence of death, but little more!
 - b) The mystery of what happens at death will not be unraveled by meditation in a cemetery, investigation of a hearse, or reflection on a coffin!
 - c) DEATH is a result of man being separated from the tree of life, when he was cast from the garden as a consequence of his spiritual death for eating the forbidden fruit!

- d) This physical **consequence** has passed on to all the heirs of Adam!
- e) No matter how much we may try to understand death, whenever it comes it is a sad event. And regardless of our comprehension of the subject, we still abhor the thought of dying.
 - 1) The frustration of death is a feeling we can readily understand, but that fear can be diminished by the promise of sharing Jesus' glory.
 - 2) The dread of judgment is another feeling that feeds our fears, but that can also be abolished to the extent of our certainty that Jesus is our Savior [**this is the strength of our faith!**]
 - 3) And with some, the uncertainty of the resurrection causes death to be a real fear, but it can be obliterated by our confidence that we are the children of God!
- 3. What if there were no Evil or Suffering or Death? If they were all eliminated rational and moral qualities would be only excess baggage, and without any real influence on human nature, responsibility, or behavior.
 - a) John Hick, in **Evil and the God of Love**, imagines some of the features of a world utterly incapable of experiencing suffering: *"It would mean that no wrong action could ever have bad effects, and that no piece of carelessness or ill-judgment in dealing with the world could ever lead to harmful consequences. If a thief were to steal a million pounds from a bank, instead of anyone being made poorer thereby, another million pounds would appear from nowhere to replenish the safe; and this, moreover, without causing any inflationary consequences...Anyone driving at breakneck speed along a narrow road and hitting a pedestrian would leave his victim miraculously unharmed; or if one slipped and fell through a fifth-floor window, gravity would be partially suspended, and he would float gently to the ground."*
 - b) **ALL THIS is within the power of God**, but it can't be realized and be consistent with His intention to serve a soul-making, character-developing purpose! *"There would be nothing wrong with stealing, because no one would ever lose anything by it; there would be no such crime as murder, because [with no death] no one could ever be killed ... Not only would there be no way in which anyone could injure anyone else, but there would also be no way in which anyone could benefit anyone else, since there would be no possibility of lack or danger!"*
- 4. So it seems **the real problems in regard to these things** are really problems that we have with our **attitudes**, our **reactions** to adversities when they come, and our **focus** on and preparation for eternity.

II. THERE ARE SEVERAL FALSE IDEAS THAT STILL EXIST IN THE MINDS OF MANY ABOUT THE SOURCES OF THESE PROBLEMS

- A. Sources of Adversity: WHO/ WHAT causes evil/ pain/ suffering/ death?
 - 1. One of the things that makes such a question so complex is that men have **offered** and people have **accepted** [*and continue to hold to*] false answers to evil and suffering!
 - a) A few even suggest that suffering is just an illusion! [Mary Baker Eddy & her followers in the "Christian Science" religion.]
 - b) A very popular explanation for pain and suffering that's been around for centuries is that these things are a result of man's own sins! [Friends of Job & people in Jesus day suggested this: **Luke 13:1-5**; **Jno.9:1-3**.]
 - c) Others suggest that God just can't do anything about it! [This is what Harold Kushner boldly asserts in his aforementioned book.] Those three men about to be cast into the furnace voiced confidence in God in **Dan.3:17**-*"Our God is able to deliver us!"* **Matt.19:26**- *"Jesus .. said .. with God all things are possible"*.
 - 2. We might suggest the following **sources**:

- a) **SATAN** is a source of evil, suffering and death. The experience of Job will cause most to be ready and willing to accept Satan's role in this, but we cannot list him as the SOLE SOURCE!
 - b) **GOD**, also, is a source of adversity, so this should tell us that not all suffering is evil! God seems to be the source of Paul's thorn in the flesh! 2 Cor.12:7-9. Ruth, whether right or wrong, holds the Lord responsible for her anxieties in Ruth 1:13, 20-21-"*...the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me...the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me...the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me!*" Amos 3:6-"*Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?*" See also Isa.45:7; 31:2
 - c) **WE** are often the source of our own sufferings. The consequences of some actions that are not sinful of themselves, even, can bring about suffering [going to sleep while driving, for instance]. Or, consider James 1:14-15; Matt.12:34-35; Rom.1:18-32-[*man is responsible for the evils encountered in the moral realm*].
 - d) **OTHER PEOPLE** can also be the source of pain and suffering and even death for others. [A drunk driver or a drunkard family man inflicts much affliction on others!]
- B. The Satanic source and influence in evil causes us to wonder about his origin, power and continued influence in this world.
1. I do not believe that Satan is eternal in nature (that he has always existed), so then I must believe that he is a created being.
 - a) As a created being, I believe he was created by Christ, as per Col.1:16-17- (NKJV) "*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*"
 - b) If he were created by Christ, then I believe he was not evil when he was created, and we have previously cited Jas.1:13.
 - c) If he were created and were "good", then I believe he must have fallen from that estate, and can perceive Luke 10:18 meaning that! So, in my mind I liken him to a "fallen angel", as per 2 Pet.2:4 and Jude 6. At least, he's going to have part with them eternally - Matt.25:41.
 2. The **extent** to which Satan is involved in the natural calamities of life may be beyond our total comprehension, but there are a few passages that give us glimpses of his activities.
 - a) In Job's ordeals, Satan (*through the instrumentality of men*) destroyed or carried away all of Job's livestock, then followed this with a great wind (*a force of nature*) which destroyed the house where Job's 10 children were, killing them all!
 - b) Then, other evils were manifested as he continued to plague Job:
 - 1) Satan smote Job with sore boils from head to foot- (*the evil of disease*).
 - 2) He caused Job to become an outcast, sit in the ash-heap, and be rejected by society- (*this is social evil*).
 - 3) His wife lost faith in Job's God and urged him to curse God and die- (*this is the evil of unbelief and disloyalty*).
 - 4) His friends who came to console him became his accusers- (*religious or philosophical evil*).
 - c) In both the physical and moral realms, Satan caused the evil that plagued God's faithful servant. A very interesting point we'll try to cover later is that it was all done with God's permission!
 3. Although we may not be able to determine with great accuracy the extent to which Satan acts in the natural world to bring various calamities and evils upon man, we can know that in the past he has done this, and that even now he probably continues to act within divinely prescribed limitations.

III. WHY AREN'T THERE SOME ANSWERS TO THESE PROBLEMS?

- A. **THANK GOD THERE ARE!** And we've had them with us all along --- we just haven't always pursued or accepted God's revelations about these things!
1. The power of God is LIMITED, not because He couldn't have pursued it, but because He has restricted Himself!
 - a) In some of these limitations that He tells us about, we understand what He's said, but often we just don't understand the "how", as in **James 1:13**- "*God cannot be tempted with evil, and He, Himself, tempteth no man!*" or in **Hebrews 6:18** where we're told that it's impossible for God to lie! **Habak.1:13**- "*He can't look upon or countenance evil!*"
 - b) We're also aware that God has restricted Himself so far as interfering with man's free agency in choosing to serve, or not to serve, God!
 - c) And, in relation to the presence of good and evil in the world God has also limited himself, so as not to interfere with those who would CHOOSE to do evil! It all begins with Satan's temptations, then with man's lusts or desires of man's heart for those things by which he's tempted, then the sin, then the death!
 2. The nature of the universe, this system of law and order and uniformity, also helps to explain some of the suffering and evil in the world.
 - a) The same laws of nature which allow us to have fire to cook with also impresses us that they house where we live can be tindered.
 - b) 55,000 +/- people die every year in vehicle accidents. But those same vehicles can also save many lives by getting the sick and injured rapidly to the doctors and hospitals.
 - c) We have certain freedoms to use the blessings God has placed here for us on the earth, but if we misuse those freedoms there is the possibility of evil and suffering. Defying the laws of gravity, polluting our waters, or stringing high voltage electric wires over our dwellings have all had a part in causing pain and adversity!
 3. All suffering is not necessarily evil!
 - a) Suffering is remedial ... it produces results. *When hurt, we often see the need for God!*
 - b) Suffering and trials build character.
 - c) Handling suffering and trials encourages others in many different ways.
 - d) Suffering will help us to seek heaven's eternal home more diligently, and then to appreciate it more completely!
- B. **STILL**, why doesn't God do something else to kind of equalize things?
1. **God HAS done something**; every time His people have needed Him, **HE WAS THERE!**
 - a) When the church came into existence **GOD WAS THERE**, in and through the Holy Spirit to guide and direct those apostles into all truth - **Jno.16:13**.
 - b) When help was needed a little later on to impress people with the need for truthful involvement, **GOD WAS THERE**, to the dismay of Ananias and Sapphira in **Acts 5**.
 - c) And when Saul needed to be convinced to be an instrument of God and then needed some special revelations and a "post-graduate" course in Arabia, and later a special call into Macedonia, **GOD WAS THERE!**
 2. **God CONTINUES to do something!** Those are not empty words when He tells the disciples, "*Lo, I'll be with you always, even to the end of the world!*" in **Matt.28:20**. And when He tells us that He CARES for us in **1 Pet.5:7**, He fulfills that commitment by manifesting His care in ways that are best for us!
- C. **WHAT has God done** about the problem of evil, suffering and death?
1. **He has SANCTIONED it at times**, as well as **brought more adversity when necessary!** **Heb.12:6-11; Psa.119:71**- "*It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes.*"
 2. But then also, He provided the only complete and lasting relief from such problems!

- a) In His righteous justice, He has determined that the consequence of evil is eternal damnation! But then, He has done the most dramatic, costly, and effective thing possible by giving His Son to die for evil man.
 - b) IT IS POSSIBLE for man to escape God's inevitable judgment on sin and evil.
 - c) It is also possible to have the **power of evil** broken by entering into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - d) The ultimate answer to the problem of evil, at the personal level, is found in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ!
3. And God has stayed in control, in both the spiritual and moral realms. First, He continues to control Himself to allow us to be creatures of choice. Then, His consistency allows a dependency upon Him that affords us the SURETY of our own salvation. **HE IS STILL HERE!**

CONCLUSION:

Suffering seems to be one of life's imponderables. It's one of those things we desperately want to know all about, but just can't figure out very well. I'm sure some of the things we'd like to know are "God's ways", and the scriptures say they are "*past finding out*"! We ARE disappointed with God when we expect something He doesn't do. That's kind of like the Jews, who were expecting a physical kingdom -- which **HE never promised them!** FALSE assumptions, even today, keep many from the security and peace of mind that God is affording us, because we keep expecting those things that are not a part of His intentions.

BRETHREN BE AT PEACE WITH GOD!

*For I consider that the
sufferings of this present time
are not worthy to be compared
with the glory that is to be
revealed to us!*

---Rom. 8:18

"I Just Want to know WHY"

Eccl.7:23-24

INTRODUCTION:

Eccl.7:23-24- *"I tested all this with wisdom, and I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it?"*

WHO, when raising our own children or maybe caring for someone else's, has not been completely astounded and confounded when a small child just *KEEPS ON ASKING* "WHY"? That seems to be the kind of persistence many of us have as we wonder about suffering and death and the influences of evil. "**WHY**" **does God allow such**, or "**WHY**" **in this particular case**, or "**WHY NOT**" in that one? And, of course, just *asking* why is not nearly enough, is it? We'd really like for God to give us an *answer*, or a *sign*, or a *special "thought"* to enlighten our perception! Doesn't God realize that *I really need to know*? Think how much good I could do for His cause if I just had some answers! But THAT'S just really OUR perception!

Heb.11:37-40- *"They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. 39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect."*

It isn't that we don't already KNOW most of the answers we can understand, it's just that we constantly need reaffirmations. Also, we're so inbred with the idea of a "works-rewarded" religion that it's hard to get away from it. The idea that keeps rolling around somewhere in our heads is "DO GOOD, and you WON'T SUFFER"!

I. ADVERSITY NEARLY ALWAYS BRINGS UP THE "WHY?" QUESTION!

A. Jesus' disciples were about "half" presumptuous (because they thought they knew part of the answer) when they asked the "WHY" question about the man's blindness in **John 9:2**: *"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"* -

1. Though it may not have been in the same words, most of us have asked such a question at one time or another, about some incident in our lives.
 - a) *Why* did this happen? *Why* did my son run away? *Why* did my father contract cancer? *Why* did our house burn? *Why* did I lose my job? Or, pointedly and selfishly, *Why ME*, Lord?
 - b) Then, of course, other questions about God Himself have followed, such as: Is God unfair? Can't God do anything about it? Does it matter to Him that we're suffering?
 - c) **Someone who's hurting asks:** "How do you explain the sorrows/pains/sufferings that have come into my life? **The answer is:** God rarely chooses to reveal answers to those things in this life!
2. Some have tried to answer the questions, most inadequately, though!
 - a) Elie Wiesel, a nobel-winning writer, had a strong faith in God, but lost it in the Holocaust.
 - 1) He finally concluded that, in light of all the pain and suffering, God just must not exist!
 - 2) Our TRUST in God must be independent of our understanding!
 - 3) Not wrong to try to discern, but must NOT lean on our own ability to perceive. **2 Cor.5:7**
 - b) Rabbi Harold Kushner took the approach that God probably thinks that life is unfair, but that He just can't do anything about it!
 - c) A third group evades the problem of unfairness by looking to the future when an exacting justice will work itself out in the universe! The Hindu doctrine of Karma applies a mathematical precision to this belief, calculating that it may take a soul 6,800,000 incarnations

to realize perfect justice. At the end of all those incarnations a person will have experienced exactly the amount of pain and pleasure that he or she deserves!

- d) A fourth approach is to flatly deny the problem and insist the world is fair! Echoing Job's friends, these people insist the world does run according to fixed, regular laws, and that good people will prosper and evil ones will fail! This is what most of the charismatic groups promise! [Like, "***Do good and support this work and you'll prosper!***"]

3. **Jesus DID give the answer, RIGHT ON THE SPOT, to His disciples!** *"It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in Him!" - **John 9:3.***

B. Just briefly now, with the hope of developing it further a little later, the "WHY" question also involves part of the "WHO" question, but often it's difficult to know WHICH ONE might be responsible in any specified case!

1. **GOD** is part of the answer! cf. **Deut.30:15-** *"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;"...Amos 3:6-* *"If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?"*
2. **EVIL**, or sin, always results in adversity [for our own sins as well as others]
3. **SATAN**, who is the one we want to blame everything on! **1 Pet.5:8-9-** (NKJV) *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."*
4. **ANGUISH** will also beget anguish.
5. **NATURAL OCCURANCES** which are good for some are also a cause of suffering for others!
 - a) Rain, for instance, which is so necessary for a lot of pasture areas, is a definite disadvantage to the orchardist whose trees are in bloom, or the alfalfa farmer whose mowed hay is drying on the ground!
 - b) **THIS IS ALWAYS TRUE: God is sensitive to what we're feeling!**
 - c) **ANOTHER TRUISM: Whatever God accomplishes through our suffering is always for our best interest!**

C. A real problem under this heading is that WE FEEL LIKE WE ARE RIGHTEOUS and we really don't want to suffer! We can understand somewhat about the suffering of sinners, but it's difficult to see "**WHY**" Abel suffered, even when he was pleasing to God, or "**WHY**", *in our righteousness*, we might also have to suffer!

1. One of the things that suggests we perhaps need to change our perspective is that "ALL SUFFERING IS NOT NECESSARILY EVIL"
 - a) Suffering is remedial ... it produces results! *Often helps us see our need for God!*
 - b) Suffering and trials build character ... they are tools for spiritual growth. *God is not like some "grandfather" -- His love always involves discipline for us!*
 - c) Handling suffering and trials also encourages others in many different ways.
 - d) Suffering helps us to seek heaven. **2 Cor.4:16-5:1-** *"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*
 - e) **The ANSWER** to evil and suffering **is found in the Savior.**
 - f) Some things are so important that they're worth the pain and suffering necessary to accomplish them. *Bodybuilding, bowling, football. What about trust, patience, longsuffering?*

- g) Adversity is often ALLOWED in our lives for different reasons:
- 1) Sometimes it's to "get our attention"!
 - 2) Often, it reminds us of God's great love!
 - 3) It will often cause us to examine ourselves!
 - 4) It will help us to conquer our pride! **2 Cor.12:7**- "*...to keep me from exalting myself!*"
 - 5) It magnifies our weaknesses and helps us focus on the strength and power of God!
2. So once more we continue to stress, **it isn't WHAT HAPPENS TO US** that we need to give a lot of attention to, but **HOW WE REACT TO THOSE THINGS THAT HAPPEN!**
- D. cf. **Judges 6:13**- "*Pray, sir, if the Lord is with us, why has all this befallen us?*" [Gideon was asking the angel re. poweer of Midianites over them!]
1. Regarding the "WHY" of suffering, Brian Hebblethwaite, in **Evil, Suffering, and Religion** suggests that different answers are offered in various religions where belief in a God is central.
 - a) In **Buddhism**, there is no interest in the WHY of suffering. Instead, the imphasis is on coping through a serene resignation and self-sacrifice.
 - b) In **Chinese Taoism**, believers are similarly urged to yield themselves passively to a mysterious universal harmony rather than resist through questioning.
 - c) In contrast, **Judaism, Islam, and Christianity** all have a doctrine of creation in which humans come into being and exist in a relationship to a God who exercises his creative will. In these religions, evil does not exist on its own, but is a disturbance or aberration of what is inherently good --- that is, the created world.
 2. Hebblethwaite also mentions five answers to the "WHY?" question about suffering:
 - a) **Suffering is divine punishment.** Mankind is guilty and therefore deserving of punishment. There's no question that examples of divine reward and punishment are present in the O.T. writings.
 - b) **Suffering is a divine test, or trial of faith.** God permitted Satan to test his servant, Job, and others. **Heb.12:7.**
 - c) **Suffering is part of the gift of human freedom.** To love God properly we have to be created free to choose Him. Moral evil and its result, suffering, are necessary components of a world of persons.
 - d) **Suffering is part of the nature and function of the physical world.** The universe functions according to certain laws that govern its well-being. Natural causes like floods, droughts, and earthquakes hurt many innocent people.
 - e) **Suffering is creation in process.** Since creation is an on-going process leading to a future goal, there is suffering now. It's just the price we pay.

II. COUPLED WITH THE "WHY" QUESTION IS THE WONDERMENT ABOUT THE SEEMING ABSENCE OF GOD'S COMMUNICATIONS WITH US IN ANY WAY!

- A. If He'd just show us He's there, and aware of our circumstances, it would go far in keeping us faithful to Him! [Many of us like Gideon wanting a SIGN: wet fleece/dry ground, then wet ground/dry fleece. **Judg.6:36-40**]
1. WHY DOES HE REMAIN SO **SILENT?**
 - a) With Joseph and Job both, God was notably silent; so it isn't just some way He's chosen to penalize us! [Both are pristine examples of God's faithful servants!]
 - 1) Joseph interpreted a dream to his brothers and they threw him into a cistern, then sold him and reported him dead.
 - 2) In Egypt, he refused an opportunity of adultery and landed in prison.

- 3) In prison, he interpreted another dream to save a cell-mate's life, and the cell mate promptly forgot about him. *[More about Job later.]*
- 4) In fact, we seem to know more about God's involvement with BOTH of these men than they knew themselves at the time!
- b) Also, as far as we know, God was silent for the 400 years between Genesis and Exodus. Many bible lessons are given on Joseph, and then on Moses and the deliverance, but I've never heard one on what happened during the **intervening 400 years**.
- c) God's silence also extended to Calvary! [When Charlemagne, king of the Franks, first heard of Jesus' arrest and execution, he exploded in rage. Grabbing his sword and rattling it in the scabbard, he shouted, "Oh, if only I had been there; I would have slain them all with my legions!" But he wasn't present, and couldn't have helped! But God, the Father, Who *could have helped*, did not lift a finger on behalf of His condemned Son!] **Actually, God was helping --- He was helping YOU and ME, sacrificing His Son so we could be saved from our SINS!**
 - 1) Even Jesus' appearance after the resurrection was SILENT! Christ presented Himself to people who already believe in Him. **So far as we know, not a single unbeliever saw Jesus after His death!**
 - 2) But **EVEN WITH SILENCE**, Jesus made a difference! cf. **Heb.4:14-16; 10:19-22**.
2. We must be careful not to impugn the love, or wisdom, or effectiveness of the God Who **STILL LOVES US**, as He did when He allowed His Son to die in our behalf!
- B. We don't always receive what we're looking for ... and often what we **FEEL** is the "perfect solution" to our anxieties and apprehensions **ISN'T ALWAYS THAT!**
 1. **ONE OF THE SURPRISES** of the Bible is that those instances when God **DID** communicate with man, it didn't usually foster long-term belief! In fact, most of them stand out as examples of **faithlessness!**
 2. The very motive for human existence is to continue to develop US to be more like GOD, and not the other way around! We're to take on the Divine nature; we're to be holy, as He is holy; we're to let Him live in us, and His mind be in us! **2 Pet.1:4; Gal.2:20; Phil.2:5**
- C. But consider for a moment our "perfect solution" of God communicating with us, and see just how effective it is!
 1. God **DID** answer men, and showed Himself on Mt. Sinai, and through the Wilderness, and upon Mt. Carmel.
 - a) But it surely didn't help those in the Exodus, did it? In fact, after just a small sample, they pled with God not to speak to them anymore, so Moses then was the mediator.
 - b) Ahab was at Mt. Carmel, and even after that was still one of the most wicked men to ever live -- with disastrous results for him!
 2. **God told Israel:** *"From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. But they did not listen to me or pay attention."* - **Jer.7:25-26**. **And Israel told God:** *"Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions ... and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"* - **Isa.30:10**.
 3. When the prophets complained loudly about God's absence, He agreed with them, **then explained why:** **He pointed out to them that what He was doing was a sign of mercy, not of weakness!**
 - a) To Jeremiah, He expressed His disgust with what He saw in Israel-- dishonest gain, shedding of innocent blood, oppression & extortion.
 - b) To Ezekiel, God explained that once Israel's rebellions had passed a certain point, He simply *"gave them over"* to their sins.
 - c) To Zechariah, He said, *"When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen"*.

4. ALL OF THE PROPHETS pointed out the same thing: **GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL!**

III. EVEN IN THIS, THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS AT WORK!

- A. God's main purpose for man, His greatest desire from us, is for us to CHOOSE GOD because we LOVE HIM, notwithstanding what's going on around us!
1. If God had told Job, "I'm using you to prove that my people really love Me and won't forsake me", it wouldn't really have been a test, would it?
 2. Job would have persevered because he needed to help God defeat Satan.
 3. But THAT wasn't the contest! What was under question was whether, upon the demonstration of God's love, man would be prone to show his love to God, even in the face of adversity
- B. Is the PROVIDENCE OF GOD involved in such a theme as this? **YES! EMPHATICALLY!** cf. **Acts 17:25, 27-28.**
1. **WHAT ACTIVATES IT?** [*What kicks it into gear?*] Is it **our need? our love? prayer? any other suggestions?**
 2. What about when it **DOESN'T** kick into gear? (That's simply from OUR perspective, because God's doing the **BEST** for us, whether we realize it or not!
 3. Providence is NOT the blind process of natural forces! When applied to God, the word *providence* means His foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby He would be in control and could carry out His purpose to its ultimate consummation.
 - a) Possessing these qualities of absolute and infinite Being, God cannot make a mistake; what He does is right, and it cannot be otherwise!
 - b) An interesting question illustrates this point: **"Is murder wrong because God said it was, or did God say it was because it's wrong?"** *Obviously, because God said it was wrong!*
- C. There IS a DIVINE PROVIDENCE, part of which **CAN be understood** because it is revealed!
1. God does not operate providentially in any way that is in conflict with His nature or His revealed will. He is holy and righteous and all His acts will be consistent with these characteristics.
 2. Providence does not over-ride man's free will.
 3. Providence must be distinguished from the miraculous.
 4. God works behind the scenes in providence.
 5. There is a special providence for the people of God. **Phil.4:19**-(NKJV) ***"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."***
 - a) **"ALL YOUR NEEDS"**: for salvation? physical needs? eternal needs? spiritual blessings in this life? [*Sometimes our desires for what God supplies greatly supercede what He's actually promised!*]
 - b) **"WHATEVER IT WAS, IT WAS RECIPROCAL FOR THE PHYSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS THEY'D SENT!"**

CONCLUSION:

The understanding about the providence of God is darkened by a limited knowledge as well as an earthly mentality. Frustratingly, we often don't know WHY it seems to ***"work"*** this time and ***not that time!*** **PERHAPS, LIKE JOB, WE JUST COULDN'T COMPREHEND THE ANSWER GOD WOULD GIVE US, ANYWAY!**

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS: A relationship with God in His Son Jesus Christ will build for us such a TRUST and CONFIDENCE in God's care and concern that we won't be fretting so much about WHY, but will be continually seeking after those actions that will keep Him involved with us HERE, and we'll be able to have the SURETY of that home with Him hereafter.

WHY MUST WE BE IN CHRIST FOR THE ASSURANCES OF “ETERNAL SECURITY?”

ETERNAL SECURITY = ETERNAL LIFE! Eph.2:1; Jno.1:4; 1 Jno.5:11.
1 John 5:11-13;

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The **SECURITY** we need for NOW and for ETERNITY is that LIFE which the Lord has promised EVERYONE who accepts the Son’s offer for relationship into the family of God. **[Read text]** *“And the witness is this, that **God has given us eternal life**, and this life is in His Son. 12 HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS THE LIFE; HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE THE LIFE. 13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that **you have eternal life**.*”*
- B. Just WHAT IS THE MEANING of the term “eternal life” in this text? John began this epistle by referring to **JESUS** as “that **eternal life**” - **1 Jno.1:2**- *“and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—”* AND HE ENDS THE LETTER by describing **E.L.** as *knowing Him* who is true and *being in Him* [JESUS]. **1 Jno.5:20**- *“And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order **that we might know Him who is true**, and **we are in Him who is true**, IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. **THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.**”*
1. We conclude from this that John uses the term “**Eternal Life**” like Jesus did when He was praying in **Jno.17:3**- *“And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”*
 2. It is a **QUALITY OF LIFE** [*not a duration of time*] that comes from a **God-originating RELATIONSHIP WITH DEITY!**
 - a) This “quality of life” begins when we are converted from “DEATH” to “LIFE”, as in **1 Jno.3:14-15**- *“We know that **we have passed out of death into life**, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*
 - b) Passing from “death” to “life” comes from “**KNOWING THE LORD!**” This “knowing” Him suggests a **CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP**, *not just some casual acquaintance!*
 - c) And since God and His Son **ARE** “**ETERNAL LIFE**,” [cf. **1 Jno.1:2**] when we come into fellowship relationship with them we have a life that is *best described* as “**eternal**” [**now** in quality and **potentially** in quantity]!
- C. And so the testimony of the text is that we lay hold on eternal life when we lay hold on Jesus Christ, because the **ONLY SECURITY** we can have eternally is **IN JESUS**. If we **TURN LOOSE** of our relationship with God **THROUGH HIS SON**, **WE’RE ALSO TURNING LOOSE OF THAT QUALITY OF LIFE WHICH HE HAS GIVEN US!**

I. THE **TRUE SOURCE** OF ETERNAL LIFE (or, *ETER. SECURITY*) IS THROUGH GOD’S SON, JESUS CHRIST!

A. Please let me state very emphatically, **Jesus is “LIFE” because HE IS GOD!**

1. He is the very “**essence**” of LIFE; He is the “**source**” of LIFE; He is the “**way**” of LIFE; He is the “**sustainer**” of LIFE; and He is the very “**epitome**” of that LIFE for which we seek!

2. AND, dear friends, let me hasten to add that He was **GOD** in the very BEGINNING OF THE CREATION, He was **GOD** when those people in the O.T. were living, and He was still **GOD** in the NT era when He walked and talked with men on earth. And HE WAS STILL GOD, even while in the fleshly body, as He yielded to the frailties of humanity and died on the cross for our sins; He was **GOD** when He resurrected and He was **GOD** when He ascended, and, *my fellow BELIEVERS, He is GOD TODAY!!!*
 3. We MUST NOT, and the true Christian CAN NOT, consider Him any less, at any point of His venture toward man's redemption, than GOD, our HEAVENLY FATHER, considered Him! He was ABOVE THE ANGELS at every point of the way!
- B. He **IS** GOD, the CREATOR!
- Jno.1:1-4**- *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."*
- Col.1:15-19**- *"And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him,"*
- Col.2:9**- *"For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,"*
- Heb.1:2-3**- *"in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;"*
- C. **AS GOD**, He is the origin, the source of all life, both PHYSICALLY **and especially** this ETERNAL LIFE we're addressing tonight!
- Jno.5:26**- *"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;"*
- 1 Jno.1:1-3**- *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."*

II. SINCE JESUS HAS LIFE BECAUSE HE IS LIFE, HE HAS POWER TO SHARE THIS ETERNAL LIFE WITH OTHERS; THAT'S WHY HE CAME IN THE FLESH!

- A. He **TALKED ABOUT AND DEMONSTRATED** this POWER OF LIFE when He was on earth!
1. With the woman at the well He told her about the water of life, or the "**LIVING WATER!**" **John 4:10**- *"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."*
 2. At the feeding of the 5,000, He spoke of the "**BREAD OF LIFE!**" **John 6:48**- [BY SAYING] "**I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.**"

3. The third citation I want to point you to is at the resurrection of Lazarus: **John 11:25-26**- “*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. (Let me ask you the same thing Jesus asked Martha) **DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?**” SEE ALSO: **John 5:28-29** “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”*”
- B. Jesus, the Son of God, wants to **GIVE YOU AND ME ETERNAL LIFE!** **Jno.10:10**- “*The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; [BUT, JESUS SAYS] I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.*”
 1. Jesus wants those who FOLLOW HIM to SHARE in this LIFE --- SO WE MUST ALLOW Him to be our Good Shepherd! **John 10:27-28**- “*My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.*”
 2. Jesus is the ONLY SOURCE for those things which would come from the Father! **Jno.14:6; 6:44-45; Heb.5:8-9.**

III. WE CAN KNOW THAT WE HAVE ETERNAL SECURITY (LIFE) FROM GOD!

- A. The information John is writing is REVEALING this SURETY! **WE CAN KNOW!!!!**
 1. Since that was his PURPOSE in writing, that’s been the THEME of the book!
 2. He is fulfilling God’s purpose in relating that we “KNOW” we are saved! We don’t just “think” so, or “hope” so, or “WISH IT WERE SO!” At least SIX times he **declares assurance** of this knowledge!
 - 1 Jno.2:3**- “*Now by this we KNOW that we KNOW HIM!*”
 - 1 Jno.2:5b**- “*By this we KNOW that we are IN HIM!*”
 - 1 Jno.3:14a**- “*We KNOW we have passed from death to life!*”
 - 1 Jno.3:19a**- “*And by this we KNOW that we are of the truth!*”
 - 1 Jno.3:24b**- “*And by this we KNOW that He abides in us!*”
 - 1 Jno.4:13a**- “*By this we KNOW that we abide in Him, and He in us!*”
 3. SO, throughout his epistle he has been giving us these “benchmarks” by which we can KNOW whether we have eternal life in us!
- B. **NOW WE’RE AT THE BOTTOM LINE:** I just really have to be able to comprehend HOW I CAN KNOW FOR SURE that I have eternal life.
 1. AGAIN, and I hate to be negative about this, but **please realize that we DO NOT have eternal life--**
 - a) **Just because** we’re religiously inclined, or a member of a church! **Jno.12:42-43; James 2:19.**
 - b) **Just because** our RELATIVES were Christians! **Ezek.18:20**- “*The soul that ” (sinneth/serveth)*”
 - c) **Just because** we’re MORE MORAL than some we know to be “Christians!”
 - d) **Just because** we have good intentions of serving God -- **LATER!** **2 Cor.6:2**
 2. SO, what’s the criteria? What’s the measurement? How can we really be SURE?
 - a) **By keeping His commandments.** **1 Jno.2:3-4.**
 - b) **By obeying His words.** **1 Jno.2:5**- “*but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*”
 - c) **By loving the Lord’s people, “the brethren!”** **1 Jno.3:14**- “*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.*”
 - d) **By believing and DOING what the Holy Spirit has revealed about such things!** **1 Jno.3:24**- “*And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by*

*this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” **1 Jno.4:13-** “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”*

- e) By an ORAL and an EXEMPLARY confession that Jesus is the Son of God! **1 Jno.4:15-**
“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”
- f) By a continued “FAITH IN ACTION” that Jesus is truly the Christ! **1 Jno.5:1-**
“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.”

CONCLUSION:

Our conclusion in this lesson is that the preponderance of evidence is that Jesus Christ is that LIFE that God sent to this earth for us, and in order for us to have it, WE MUST BE IN CHRIST! NOT ONLY have we been impressed with the fact that LIFE IS IN CHRIST, we have to PUT FORTH THE EFFORT to get there ourselves! FRIENDS, **IT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN!**

It takes a DESIGNED EFFORT on our part to OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE! GOD is the One Who did the DESIGN! WE must follow His Design! Are you willing at this moment to be all the Lord wants you to be, and to come into Christ, where He has put Eternal Life?

"THE WILL OF GOD"

INTRODUCTION:

Needless to say, there are some great misconceptions regarding the title of this segment of our study. Someone trying to comfort the grieving parents who'd lost their small child to cancer, who had suffered terribly for a year before succumbing, uses the words, "Well, it was just God's will." A religious group in a prayer meeting regarding a plane crash in which there were 18 survivors were very liberal in their use of the thought: "It was the will of God!" that these people were saved! Was it also the "will of God" that the other 147 people aboard the plane DIED? **OR**, dare we say that the great successes of "**con**" men and others who prey on the aged or unprotected are just *fulfilling "God's will"*? Doesn't God's providential care for us demand that if we're trying to fulfill His purpose in our lives that "HIS WILL" is for good things to happen to us? **A vital point we want to get across in this lesson is that everything that happens is not necessarily "God's will" ... at least in the sense most people use the term: "GOD'S DESIRED DETERMINATION!"**

I. GOD DOES PROMISE GOOD THINGS FOR US --- BUT DOES THE BASIS FOR RECEIVING HIS BLESSINGS RELATE TO HOW WE TRY TO OBEY HIS COMMANDMENTS?

- A. What do the PROMISES OF GOD have to do with a lesson like this? Aren't His promises, in a sense, a preview of His WILL?
1. When God gave His promise to Abraham in Gen.12:1-3, it effected a great change in His revealing Himself to men.
 - a) Always before, those early interventions with His creation was for the purpose of punishment! It had been a response to human rebellion!
 - b) Now, with Abraham, God steps in not to punish, but to set into motion a new plan, **with attendant promises**, for human history!
 - 1) And for these promises, God wanted man to show faith in Him. "Faith" is what God valued, and it soon became clear that faith was the best way for humans to express a love for God. **Abraham demonstrated for us the kind of faith that pleased God**, and it *"was counted to him for righteousness"*.
 - 2) And, to be effective, this "faith" had to be demonstrated in the face of monstrous ordeals, and afflictions, and turmoils, and adversities, as that roll-call in Hebrews 11 brings to our attention.
 - 3) We have only to cite examples of people such as Joseph or Daniel to illustrate the overwhelming complexities and ordeals that their trust and steadfastness and love for God had to see them through.
 2. WHAT DOES GOD WANT OF US? ONLY the same things He has always wanted of all His people. He wants us to show our love for Him by our faith! Micah 6:8-*"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God!"*
- B. OUR goals and our perspectives on life determine our responses to adversity, and show whether we're fulfilling GOD'S GOALS FOR US; that is, allowing Him to USE US!
1. **God's goal for us is that we be "holy" and "blameless"**. Eph 1:3-4 (NKJV) *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy and without blame** before Him in love,"* Col 1:21-23 (NKJV) *"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you **holy, and blameless, and above reproach** in*

*His sight; 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." **Rom 8:29** (NKJV) "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to **be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

2. His goal for us is NOT to just imitate Jesus Christ, but to LET JESUS LIVE IN OUR PLACE! God wants our **SELF** crucified! **Gal.2:20.**
 - a) We can do many "religious" activities and still be exalting **SELF**, if our motives and attitudes and purposes aren't in keeping with the standard the Lord has given us!
 - 1) We PRAY, especially when we have a special, personal need.
 - 2) We STUDY, for our comfort or for our direction -- or to keep up with the other members of the class.
 - 3) We are KIND to others, so they will be kind to us!
 - 4) We CONTRIBUTE, because a special need has been mentioned that has touched our hearts.
 - 5) We WITNESS to others only when we've been highly motivated to do so.
 - 6) We are habitual, and intimidated by others' standard of right action, in our ATTENDANCE.
 - b) ALL OF THESE are activities that Christ, Himself, did while He was on earth, yet **do these actions really sound like Christ?** Something just really seems to be wrong, doesn't it?
- C. We're ready to admit that we're sometimes *disappointed with God* when we have to suffer, or a prayer is not answered in a way we'd like, or there's still things we don't understand so we don't always perceive how to cope with them --- **BUT DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT GOD'S EVER BEEN DISAPPOINTED WITH US?**
 1. Just look at the people in the pews of ANY local congregation and [as per **2 Cor.13:5**] ask yourself: **"IS THIS REALLY WHAT GOD HAD IN MIND?"** God's trying to appeal to the lost of the world through the members of local congregations ... *that's His plan* ... kind of gives a little more meaning to the phrase *"the foolishness of preaching"* when you realize who's to do the preaching, doesn't it? Often, a better term might be the **"preaching by the foolish"!**
 2. Frederick Buechner, in his book **A Room Called Remember**, marvels at the seeming rashness of using MAN for the most important work in the world: **"to choose for his holy work in the world ... lamebrains and misfits and nitpickers and holier-than-thous and stuffed shirts and odd ducks and egomaniacs and milquetoasts and closet sensualists"**. And yet, Paul says that *"the foolishness of God is wiser than men"!*
 3. Yes, ***if you want to see God today, then look at the people who belong to Him --- they are His "bodies". They are the body of Christ!*** And referring to a previous lesson, where so many think God ought to come right out and **SAY** something, or **DO** something, we asked the question, **IS GOD SILENT?** We should really ask it like this: **Is the Church silent?** We are his mouthpiece, his **designated speakers** on this planet.
- D. We must conclude that God has continued to BLESS US, according to His divine WILL, in spite of our adherence to His will. THAT'S WHY we refer to God's love as an *"agape"* love --- that is, ***it's unconditional!*** We all understand, of course, that sometimes we must **do something** to RECEIVE His blessings!
 1. HOW are His promises of physical blessings for us effected?
 - a) Such as, **Deut.8:18**, where it says that the *"power to get wealth"* comes from God?
 - b) Or, **2 Cor.9:8-11**, where He seems to promise that if we'll do good He'll keep providing us with **the means to do more good?**

2. It doesn't **just** depend on OUR ACTIONS, we know, but to me this falls into the same category as the answering of prayers and invoking His care!
 - a) We do His will in any give situation the best we can -- then **TRUST GOD** for the results!
 - b) I believe **THAT'S** the way prayers are answered and **THAT'S** the way His providence is so often EFFECTED!

II. **PRAYERS --- HOW DO THEY WORK?**

- A First of all, what does **PRAYER** have to do with such a study as this?
 1. It causes us to consider that **there are options/alternatives** that need to be decided on and pursued, as ambitiously as we can!
 2. Prayer helps us to focus on our dependency, and helps us to be more **HUMBLE!**
 3. PRAYER teaches us and gives us hope: Relief/ Understanding/ teaches us Patience/ Helps us to look forward to something BETTER!
 4. Our prayers, if they're to be effective, must be of the disposition **"IF IT BE THY WILL!"**
- B. **PRAYER IS A MEANS OF MANIFESTING OUR CONTINUED YIELDING TO THE WILL OF GOD! Col.4:12.**
 1. The goal of both Paul and Epaphras that **"others might be complete and fully assured in Christ"** was enhanced by the diligent efforts of each toward that goal through prayers!
 - a) This is a marked difference from many today who act like you get the blessings of God in the work of the kingdom just like you get candy from a machine: **put in the coins and out comes the treat!**
 - b) So, the thought seems to be and efforts are based on the premise that, regardless of who or what you are, if you plan wisely, work hard, have plenty of personality, money & skill, everything comes out all right! **Do you believe that's the way it is?**
 - 1) Many modern "christians" approach efforts in the kingdom that require great undertakings and momentous decisions without much effort of prayer. [I've been impressed that the "power" of school administrators or of attorneys to produce results is NOT that they know all the answers, **but they know where to GET THE ANSWERS**, and how to effectually serve their benefactors!]
 - 2) SO, we're really not very smart, OR have forgotten where to **get the answers** when gospel meetings, classes, and services are planned and we approach them without petitioning the Lord, in whose name it's all being done! *[EVEN if praying were just psychological, it STILL needs to be done!]*
 - 3) Major undertakings are often engaged in with only human understanding and skills, and then there's a great wonder why things didn't work out better ... or why many churches of Christ are diminishing in numbers, devotion, allegiance and spiritual values!
 2. KINGDOM WORK is not the same as secular work that might be governed by material or scientific principles and whose outcome may be determined by merely pushing the right set of buttons -- **or inserting the right coins!** *[There's not a "template" that works the same in appealing to every sinner, or that causes remorseful repentance in every erring child of God!]*
 3. There is another, POTENT, Divine, PROMISED ELEMENT that accompanies the work of Jesus Christ, and that's the assurance that HE WILL BE WITH US! **Matt.18:20; 28:20; 1 Jno.5:14-15.**
- C. Prayer is largely a response to God's actions, ALONG WITH our perceptions as to its effectiveness -- which is a manifestation of our faith in the WILL OF GOD! Jack Cottrell states in his book, **What The Bible Says About God The Ruler**, ***"A failure to respond [pray-vw] to providence is a warning sign of a dead soul!"***
 1. The "world-view" of our day is that we live in a closed system, which has no place for a God who changes things! **[The argument goes something like this: *there is a cause for every effect and***

an effect for every cause. Since things (effects) happen because of natural laws, their causes can be discovered by observation and experimentation. Thus, things are explainable, understandable, and predictable! God, if there is a God, will not intrude on the established order; so there is little use for prayer. After all, what's the use of praying in a system where "what is going to be will be"?]

2. Some Christians, even, are confused by their misunderstanding between miraculous effects of God's actions and the providential effectiveness of prayers.
 - a) We all understand, accurately I believe, that miracles have ceased; but we must also correctly understand that **GOD CAN ALSO DO THINGS** that do not involve the miraculous!
 - b) There are too many examples of God working through the natural realm, so it's erroneous to think that the only way God can effect changes in the world is by the working of miracles!
 - 1) The **NATURAL REALM** is a part of God's CREATION, and as a result is compatible to and **UNDER HIS WILL!**
 - 2) He will not violate His codes of the natural realm, because they are principles of His own nature, but He is free to manipulate them within the normal bounds of **HIS** determination.
 - 3) Specifically, the principles of nature themselves operate **because God is operating them!** This is why He is free to manipulate them!
 - c) Paul has full confidence in the effectiveness of prayer, not just for apostles who could work miracles, but for those everyday church members who had a faith and confidence in their Creator! cf. **Phil.4:6**-(NKJV) *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;"*
3. If God is not a personal God who listens to and communes with us, able to do what we ask, and merciful to act in our best interests, **WHY TALK TO HIM AT ALL?** Why ask for anything or give Him thanks for anything **if our words to Him in prayer are meaningless?**
 - a) Whatever it is, Paul says to talk to God about it! **PRAY!** Seek God's assistance in your life! Lay your needs before the throne of grace!
 - b) Is Paul saying that God's going to do everything you want done, regardless? Certainly **NOT!**
 - 1) Even Paul's own experience is proof that prayers are not always answered in ways we first perceive as being prudent.
 - 2) God refused to remove Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (**2 Cor.12:8**) because, as Paul later discovered, he needed that thorn! (**12:7**).
 - 3) So then, Paul stopped praying for its removal and began boasting and taking pleasure in it! (**12:9-10**).

III. WHAT IS THE "WILL OF GOD"? [It's never been as clearly defined for us as it was for Moses and Gideon, et al, because we've never heard His booming voice from the whirlwind!]

A. CREATION was an expression of God's will!

1. **CREATION** of the heavens & earth expresses an absolute or infinite **POWER**; and bringing a *kosmos* out of the original *chaos* further reveals that that absolute power was guided by an infinite **INTELLIGENCE** who had absolute **KNOWLEDGE** of what He wanted and the absolute **WISDOM** to provide for what He intended to do!
 - a) So God's knowledge (what He wanted) **WAS WHAT HE PLANNED!**
 - b) This led to His will (purpose), **WHICH WAS HIS DESIRE!**
 - c) Which led to His Intelligence, **THE MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL!**
 - d) Which then led to His Creation, **THE RESULT!**
2. Jehovah's creative power was expressed through His word ... **spoken into existence** by His word.

3. So, according to this, the creation of all things is an expression of God's divine will; they existed in His mind or purpose before the creation, and, instead of coming through a process of evolution, they were spoken into existence by His will.
 4. God created His universe so that He has complete control over all, except where He has created **free beings** (*angels and men*). Over these His sovereignty is exercised by moral suasion through moral government; *there is no other way by which He can control a moral being.*
- B. God's infinite forethought enabled Him to create a universe that He could control **through laws which express His will**. This control covers both the animate and the inanimate worlds, including man and the nations! By this **designed control** He is able to achieve His divine purposes.
1. Because *man was created a free being* he is capable of making his own choices; he can obey or disobey the laws under which he lives, and *can thereby enjoy or suffer the consequences of his actions.*
 2. Since he can obey or disobey, God's foresight and forethought had a plan for him if he should not sin (**which is unrevealed to us**) and a plan for his redemption should he sin (**which is what we have revealed in the Bible**).
 3. The Bible is the revealing of that plan for sinful man AS WELL AS THE overcoming and destruction of Satan who enticed man to sin.
- C. The purpose for that revelation is in order to EFFECT THE SALVATION of the one who chose to separate from God! **Eph.1:3-14.**
1. That which God PURPOSED was an **expression of His will!** [*But which was a mystery until the "fulness of times".*]
 2. That will is REVEALED and preached in, and through, the gospel. [Paul says it was given to him to preach the mystery to the Gentiles, "*And to make all men see what is the dispensation (the arrangement or administration) of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things*"- **Eph.3:9**]
 3. The fulfilling of that purpose was so SURE -- SO CERTAIN -- that Paul could speak of it as though it were already consummated even as it lay a silent plan in the mind of God in eternity.
 - a) That **CERTAINTY OF FULFILLMENT** is expressed in such passages as **Rom. 8:29-30-** (NKJV) "*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*" (**the "called" are those who hear and heed the word**); **Matt.21:14--** "*Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.*" **23:37-**"*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*" **1 Tim.2:4-** "*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" **2 Pet.3:9-** "*God is not slack concerning His promises...*"
 - b) Paul is looking at the completed purpose **from God's point of view before the world was even created and sees it as if completed in eternity!**
 - c) It is as one who draws a house plan and, **in the plan**, can see the house as it will be when completed and occupied!
 4. This heaven-born plan of God was "*a mystery*" until fulfilled in Christ and revealed by the Holy Spirit thru the apostles.
- D. The SUCCESS of this plan of God for man is totally dependent on GOD BEING IN CONTROL of His creation!
- a) God DOES work in our lives and is in control, **but all we can know is what's revealed!** **Eccl.3:1-** "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*"

- b) And the reason we cannot explain everything someone might desire to know about it all is because our understanding is restricted.
- c) In this same vein the wise man continues in **vs. 14**-*"I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever [i.e. final]: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God hath done it that man should fear before Him"*.
- d) WHY DOES the "Will of God" allow evil and suffering in the world? The wise man gives us the answer in **vs.18**: *"I said in my heart, it is because of the sons of men, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but as beasts!"*
- E. According to William N. Clark in **An Outline of Christian Theology**, there are at least four truths concerning God's providence that are **AN EXPRESSION OF HIS WILL!**
1. Man under the natural order is subject to all natural laws and consequences --- blessings, accidents, suffering, and death.
 2. The natural order is adapted to the moral and spiritual training of free beings. **Jas.1:3-5**: (NKJV) *"knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."* **1 Pet.1:5-6**: (NKJV) *"who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,"*
 3. God has the power of guiding free beings **from above their freedom** without interfering with it; including both nations and individuals!
 4. **IF HE WILLS IT**, God can directly alter the course of events **in answer to** human prayer or even **without it**.
- F. We're not told what life would have been like on earth in a sinless state or what God's plan for man was in such a state!
1. The fact is that when he did sin he brought about his separation from God in his untimely spiritual death, and ultimately his physical death!
 2. But even as He had a plan for man had he not sinned, so He also had a plan or purpose for his redemption if he should sin!
 3. **The unfolding and carrying out of this purpose in His providence is the central theme of the Bible!**
- G. The fact that the phrase "the will of God" can be used in several ways allows confusion and misunderstanding to take place. It would be best to understand that there's a difference in the **Intentional** Will, and the **Circumstantial** Will, and the **Ultimate** Will!
1. The *intentional will of God* would be what God would prefer, what He intends to happen to men. [**Two categories**: the *Revealed Will* and the *Unrevealed Will* of God.]
 2. The *circumstantial will of God* would be what God does due to circumstances arising that He did not intend. God allows man free will, which often leads to sin. God does not intend this sin, but when it occurs God's will is how He reacts under those circumstances. [Example: **Gen.6:6-7**- re. the destruction of Sodom. 50/ 40/ 30/ 20/ 10 righteous people in order to SAVE IT!]
 3. The *ultimate will of God* is what God can ultimately achieve in the various circumstances of life such as the sinful rebellion of man. [These three meanings can be illustrated by examining God's will in relation to the pain, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ.]
- H. Paul recognized that his plans were to be made, cognizant of the divine providence superintending his life, as illustrated in these verses: [**Examples of the unrevealed will of God. See also: Jas.4:13-17**]
- Acts 18:21** (NKJV) *"but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus."*

Rom 1:10 (NKJV) *"making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."*

1 Cor 4:19 (NKJV) *"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power."*

1 Cor 16:5-7 (NKJV) *"Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). 6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits."*

Phil 1:12 (NKJV) *"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,"*

Phil 1:19 (NKJV) *"For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,"*

Phile 1:22 (NKJV) *"But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you."*

1. So, he set his course of action and pursued the doing of God's will no matter how closely things worked out to what he had personally planned!
 2. It was not a "DEFEATIST'S ATTITUDE, but full assurance that God was with him and helping him every step of the way! See **Phil.4:11-13**.
 - a) It's a shame **vs.13** has been wrested from its context by many today!
 - b) Paul is saying he was adequate to any circumstance, good or bad. He could bear with equal composure of spirit whatever providence permitted to come his way!
 - 1) Paul is confident in maintaining his joy, regardless of circumstances.
 - 2) Paul's faith was in Jesus Christ, and THIS was his power connection!
 - 3). WE can have this same connection today, and because of this Christians should be the most positive people on earth! [But the quest for **THINGS** often makes us negative!]
- I. **ROMANS 8:28**.- *"And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose."* This is an oft quoted and much misunderstood and misapplied passage of scripture!
1. It is erroneous to interpret this to mean that "Only good things will happen to those who love God." "All things" doesn't mean everything that happens in our lives, but it's those things of God's plan that effect [bring about] our salvation.
 - a) **THAT** is what he has been talking about in the previous text, and also what he continues to pursue as he outlines God's scheme of redemption and then of the Christian's security in Christ!
 - b) This "mystery" and then the "revealing" had to do with planning and activity in and by those in the "unseen world"!
 2. God uses adversity in the lives of His children. The circumstances and events that we frequently see as "setbacks" are more often the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth, so the promise of Paul here has to be understood conditionally!
 - a) The "good" is not about a man who loses his job and then in the end gets a better one! And it is NOT the story of a young woman who loses her love only to find a better catch later on!
 - b) The reason we struggle so intensely with adversity is often because we have yet to adopt God's perspective and priorities. A quick perusal of the lives of bible characters impresses us that their endings are seldom with the words: "And they lived happily ever after!" Usually, it's just the opposite! Moses died in the desert just a few miles before he got to the Promised land. Stephen was martyred. And traditionally, all the apostles but John met early and tragic deaths!

3. SO, "*all things*" [ALL OF THE PROVISIONS GOD HAS MADE REGARDING HIS SCHEME OF REDEMPTION FOR MAN] will "*work together*" [ACCOMPLISH, GET THE JOB DONE] "*for good*" [WILL BE EFFECTIVE FOR US, WILL GRANT US GOD'S SALVATION] "*to them that love the Lord*" [THOSE WHO ARE WORKING HIS WILL, **Jno.14:15**-"*If you love me you will keep my commandments*"].

CONCLUSION:

Our **acceptance of** OR our **confidence in** God's providence, the fulfillment of His will, is NOT IN MEASURING WHAT HAPPENS TO US, but it **IS TOTALLY COMMENSURATE WITH HOW WE HANDLE IT!** **AND HOW WE HANDLE IT** very much depends on the POWER at our disposal and how we utilize it in serving God!

Obedience within the POWER of the gospel will release us from the POWER of sin and will also enable us with the POWER that comes from above to sustain us in the paths of righteousness. ALL IN KEEPING WITH WHAT HE HAS REVEALED IN HIS WILL TO US. Have you obeyed it? Are you living in it? Are you sharing it with others? **ARE YOU READY TO ENGAGE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?**

"BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION"

INTRODUCTION:

IN THIS STUDY TONIGHT I want to suggest some ideas I believe have their basis in the scriptures. I believe they will strengthen our faith and gives us some perceptions that will assist us in staying strong in the Lord, **NO MATTER WHAT MAY CONFRONT US!**

NO MORTAL MAN can know how close and familiar the relations are which he sustains to the invisible world! Though it is true that our final home, associates, and employments are measurably hidden in mystery, and that there is but little revealed of that future beyond the veil, ***at least we need not hide from that information that IS revealed!***

I want to go to heaven. I want to be with the redeemed of all ages. I want to be with that throng that praises the Lord forever. **AND RIGHT NOW, TODAY, I WANT EVERY SAMPLE, EVERY FORETASTE, EVERY GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN GOD WILL LET ME HAVE! *I truly believe that every taste of heaven I can get right now will help me lay my claim to that eternal abode!***

I'm particularly afraid that we're much too engrossed with this world and what IT has to offer. We think not enough and too superficially of those things of the invisible world that are only slightly obscured! It may be safely affirmed that nothing now visible is eternal, or destined to endless existence. Paul says that the things which are seen are **TEMPORAL**, and that settles the question! **2 Cor.4:18-** (NKJV) *"while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

I. "FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT!" -- 2 COR.5:7

- A. Isn't it just amazing to you to realize to how great an extent we live by faith? To what a great extent the principle of faith permeates all the divisions of our lives? To know how predominantly we trust in the unseen?
1. I cite an illustration from Lard's Quarterly of 1866 in which one of the authors speaks of the unseen, quickening part of the body in these words: *"I have a companion. This companion I call my spirit, my life. This spirit has been living with me more than 30 years. Sleeping or waking, it has never for one moment left me. This spirit, the subjective I, has made my body the instrument of all that has ever been accomplished and attributed to the objective me. This spirit dwells in what is called my body, but really it is the spirit's body. The body becomes weary; it seeks rest. Not so the spirit. I do not think that my spirit has ever slept or rested for one second! And yet I have never seen it."* However vague it may be, we still hold on to it, cater to it, and find out all we can about it, don't we?
 2. Another demonstration of our **living by faith** is seen when we consider the physical universe in which we live. We don't see the secret forces, the hidden powers, that control and propel this magnificent machinery.
 - a) There is a hand that moves the planets in their appointed orbits, and turns the seasons around, and we believe it's there, but we've never seen this hand!
 - b) I pay monthly for and avail myself of the use of electricity and, though I've never seen it, I still believe in and appreciate its existence!
 - c) No one can look upon these and a thousand other exquisite exhibitions of the Lord Almighty, **by** and **in which** we *walk by faith*, and find fault in carefully considered observations of the

aura and contemplated glory of that throne which is only slightly enshrouded in clouds and darkness to our weak senses! And a primary reason for this is **because that's what we're focused on!**

- 1) The miser may occasionally think of government, social or intellectual progress, art, literature and religion; maybe even occasionally of angels and demons, or of heaven and hell; but his **focus**, his *home thought*, is of his money!
- 2) The sinner may sometimes think of the man called JESUS, and perhaps occasionally even of mercy or pardon or heaven; but his **focus**, his *home thought*, is of the world and the things of the world; of its pleasures of sinful indulgence; of the follies of this transitory life; and he will finally set his course in a stubborn rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) The **CHRISTIAN'S** **focus**, his *home thought*, is on that relationship he sustains with his Lord Jesus.
 - i. To him all earthly knowledge is valueless, except as it strengthens his wing for his heavenly flight.
 - ii. Is it any wonder then that he often contemplates that heavenly abode, which is just out of his conceptual visions, **perhaps just barely** beyond human survey?

B. IN FACT, WHAT IS THE BIBLE BUT A GRAND RECORD OF THE THINGS OF THE UNSEEN WORLD?

1. It's a divine depository of facts concerning persons and places that but few mortal eyes have ever seen --- and we're asked to **ACCEPT THEM BY FAITH!**
2. It's only when our FAITH is manifested in our love and actions that we truly are drawing closer to the LORD!

II. SINCE FAITH COMES BY THE WORD OF GOD, WHAT'S IN IT TO ENLIGHTEN US ABOUT THAT UNSEEN WORLD?

A. We now point to some passages of scripture that, hopefully, will make that ethereal home of the soul more meaningful and sure, more real and closer to us, and make it even more to be desired and allow us a surer hand to lay hold on it!

1. **II KINGS 6:8-17:** (NKJV) *"Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp will be in such and such a place." 9 And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." 10 Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. 11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" 12 And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." 13 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan." 14 Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. 15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "**LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.**" Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. **And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**"*

- a) The young servant of Elisha could see with physical awareness the great horde of the enemy encompassing the city, but in answer to Elisha's prayer the Lord revealed also to him **the mountain covered with horsemen and chariots of fire and warrior-angels that excelled in**

strength, a great force of God, invisible to mortal eyes, and ready to assist as God may decree.

- b) It is my understanding, **and I accept it by faith**, that we are subjects of interest to those dwelling in the unseen world; that angelic beings are constantly aware of our physical situations; that occasionally (but rarely) some **may be** permitted to see those bright ministers before death; and that if it were in keeping with God's will He could open our eyes to see shining hosts of saints and angels standing thickly all around us!
2. **ACTS 7:54-56:** (NKJV) *"When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, GAZED INTO HEAVEN AND SAW THE GLORY OF GOD, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!""*
- a) This was not a miracle, but a vision; a special revelation to Stephen, as the first Christian who died a violent death for the cause of Christ. It was for the purpose of attesting to the truth of the message and the fiery invective against those wicked and rebellious Jews, and to strengthen Stephen's purpose to remain firm to the end!
- b) All this was lost to the crowd! Only to Stephen it meant something -- and to all who live as Stephen lived, and die in the faith in which he died!
- 1) Jesus died without so much as a hand, human nor divine, to support His drooping head.
 - 2) But not so with His saints! No Christian dies beside whom the Savior does not stand, and over whose sinking body He does not bend. While the ties of heart-strings are breaking and nature's encasement of the immortal is dissolving, Jesus is still whispering the words: *"Fear not, I am with thee, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*
3. **LUKE 16:22-24, 27-28:** (NKJV) *"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 27 Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'"*
- a) Though this scene is depicted in **parabolic language** its impact is not lessened one whit, for even in parables the Savior would never suppose nor describe something impossible to occur.
- b) He tells us the angels of God were bearing away this ransomed spirit to the realms of light; and, if Lazarus, why not all the saints? Don't we all need the assistance of attending angels? **[The following four quotes are "conjectures" by some, offered only as "possibilities" and are drawn from the pages of Lard's Quarterly, vol. 3!]**
- 1) *"How often have we read and heard of dying persons who affirmed that they enjoyed heavenly visions! And, try as some might, they can't just be set aside as the impulses of fevered brains, or as the fond fancies of distorted imaginations!" -Lard's Quarterly, Vol.3.*
 - 2) *"That loving mother who kept her weary, anxious vigils around the couch of her dying child, in tenderness watched death's throes ravage that precious little body. Every cramp and each convulsion of that little sufferer was a barbed arrow through her own heart! But now, the storm of intense suffering subsides and the pulseless calm of death approaches. A bright smile spreads over that placid palid face, the babe opens her eyes and with a bound rushes to the embrace of the beckoning angels. No attending angels you say, the radiance of whose shining wings was not reflected in the face of that dying infant?" Lard's Quarterly, Vol.3.*
 - 3) *"Bishop McKendree, one of the purest and best men that ever lived, affirmed that in the hour of death his room was full of angels. And why not? They had come for him. And if it were deemed necessary by Fatherly love and mercy that a view of their presence should cheer his heart in the death-agony, THEN I BELIEVE HE SAW THEM!" Lard's Quarterly, Vol.3.*

- 4) "Multiplied other instances are just too numerous and too emphatic to deny unequivocally, and still so vapor-shrouded to explain in detail!" -Lard's Quarterly, Vol.3.
4. **HEBREWS 1:14; 12:22; MATTHEW 18:10:** "Are they [ANGELS] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, **to an innumerable company of angels,**" "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven **their angels always see the face of My Father** who is in heaven."
- a) It is positively and without qualification asserted here that the angels are ministering spirits and that they are sent forth, and it indicates they are concerned about us.
- b) Also, the Hebrew writer affirms that all Christians have come to this innumerable company of angels, who are, unquestionably, much nearer to us than we might imagine! For the present, however, it pleases infinite wisdom to exclude us from an awareness fellowship with them.
- c) What about "guardian" angels? Do they help in alleviating and protecting us from evil, pain, suffering and death? **Matt.18:10; Heb.1:14; Luke 16:19ff.** There's no doubt, in my mind, that ***any angelic*** care is an extension of GOD'S CARE (**1 Pet.5:7**) and that they, of course, would not do anything to our benefit without direction from the Father. **[I don't believe the Catholic doctrine that we each have our own particular angel!]**
- d) **I JUST REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW** the angels may be serving me while I'm alive, and I surely don't believe that I have the right to "call twelve legions of angels" to my defense just any time I may desire, but **I DO truly believe** that at the end of a life that has pleased the Father, they'll be there to carry me also to Abraham's bosom!

III. JUST HOW SURE CAN WE BE ABOUT THOSE THINGS IN THE INVISIBLE WORLD?

- A. They're just as *SURE* as the word of God, for that's where they're mentioned! **Heb.6:19; 2 Pet.1:19.** I account for the fact of these celestial visions being granted only in the hour of death, because **then the work of faith is done!** We *STILL* walk by faith, not by sight!
1. In accompaniment **WITH** and growing out of relationships **TO** the invisible, we have need to continue to urge some duties which will persevere our relationship with the Father.
- a) **The Word of God.** Our understandings of life and immortality were brought to us in the gospel! The more we know of the Bible, the more learned we will be in the things of the invisible. That's where our information comes from and, to the proportion in which we neglect the Bible we will lose whatever interest has been piqued in the things which are not seen and eternal! The Bible is all we have that has to do expressly with the future and unseen. All outside this volume is the merest, baldest conjecture!
- b) **Faith.** "*Now faith is the sure confidence with respect to things hoped for, a firm persuasion with respect to things not seen.*" There is nothing too high or too hard for faith, as it respects our relations to God, and based upon His promises to the human family. And it is through faith we're able to turn our gaze from the visible and perishable and can turn toward the invisible and eternal. By faith we have humbly bowed before Him and have committed our most sacred and eternal interests to His ever awareness! We believe He will fulfill all His promises!
- c) **Prayer.** It is just impossible to exaggerate the importance of prayer. In what other more poignant way do we hold communion with the infinite and eternal Being Whom we worship? Prayer opens the door to unspeakable pleasures and beautiful visions of that relationship we have with the Eternal One!
- B. **HOW WONDERFUL IT IS** to be able to listen for that which has come from beyond the veil where God is relating to us by His word those pleasures He derives from our efforts!

1. How really wonderful it is that we can reach back to Him in the expression of our faith called "love", manifesting it in ways He has said are pleasurable to Him!
2. Certainly not the least important asset we have is that we can voice our concerns and our desires, and offer our thanks and present our supplications and intercessions, as we talk with the Father of Lights!
3. It is divinely true that *"they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."*

IV. THE WAGER: GOD vs. SATAN vs. JOB

- A. The first and last chapters of Job make it clear that he was unknowingly performing in a cosmic showdown before spectators in the unseen world!
 1. Despite the fact that all but a few pages of Job deal with the problems of pain and suffering, I concur with Philip Yancey and others that, as a whole, the book is about *FAITH* in its most naked form!
 2. The big "wager" is how Job will respond to the afflictions Satan brings upon him. Will he trust God, or deny him? Of course, Job doesn't know he's the "pawn" in this contest as to whether someone can LOVE GOD, without being "bought" to do so. And he just keeps wondering and asking, "Why me? What did I do wrong? What is God trying to tell me?" And the astounding answer is, **JOB DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!** Even God had said he was *"blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil!"*
 3. Belief in the invisible world forms a crucial dividing line of faith today. Many go about their daily routines without the slightest consideration of the existence of an unseen world. Even though slight "peeks" are suggested in places like **Luke 10:18** [*"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"*], and **Luke 15:7** [*"..joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than..."*], or **Rev.12** [where a baby's birth disturbs the entire universe].
 4. Very often, frustration and despair begin with Job-like circumstances. Death of a loved one, a tragic accident, loss of employment by a family man may bring all of Job's questions home to us! *"Why me? What does God have against me? Why does He seem so distant when I need Him?"*
 - a) When tragedy strikes we will live in shadow, unaware of what is transpiring in the unseen world! Once again, God could be letting His reputation ride on the response of unpredictable human beings. THE MORE IMPORTANT BATTLE, as seen in Job, **takes place inside us!** So while I refuse to suggest that everything that happens to me is a result of a contest between God and Satan, I must be impressed that **GOD IS GLORIFIED IN ME** when I'm faithful to Him! ***One person's faith can make a difference!***
 - b) Every temptation before us and every tragedy that confronts us is a reenactment of God's original question in creation -- *"Will the humans choose FOR Me or AGAINST Me?"* -- and we can be an important part of the answer to that question! **OUR FAITH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**
 - c) **Just one step further:** *the kind of faith that pleases God is the kind that JOB, and those people of God mentioned in Hebrews 11, had!* It's more than just a child-like trust. ***It's something MORE ... it's a FIDELITY ... a hang-on-at-any-cost kind of faith!*** We, as Christians, understand the difference -- we must PRACTICE the difference!
 - 1) For the most part, we have little understanding what our faith really means to God! Suffice it to say that there's no better way to express our love to God than by exercising an undaunting fidelity to Him!
 - 2) God's people serve as the principal foot soldiers in the warfare between the unseen forces of good and evil, and this kind of faith is our most powerful weapon!

3) James and Peter and Paul tell us how to exemplify such faith: *"Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds". "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials". "We also rejoice in our sufferings"*.

- B. God spectacularly answered Job's biggest question: "Is Anybody out there?" What God said doesn't seem nearly so important to Job as the mere fact of His presence! Once Job perceived the unseen world all his urgent questions faded away!
1. We too live among clues and rumors, some of which argue against a powerful, loving God. Strong faith must continue to be exercised on our part with consistency, and with no degree of uncertainty!
 2. TRUE and acceptable FAITH isn't so much for trying to *manipulate God* into doing our will as it is to **position and prod us to do His will!**

CONCLUSION:

I recognize that something that's vaguely understood can be dismissed, and often is, with the flippant remark that "we walk by faith, not by sight", but I hope we've come to be impressed that "walking by faith" is a POSITIVE action, and not just a "default" answer to our ignorance about something. I hope the faith of all of us has been strengthened!

AGAIN, I do not suggest that everything that happens to us, whether JOY or ADVERSITY, is because there's a great contest going on over US in the unseen world! That IS what was happening with Job. It MAY sometimes, or all times, be happening with us --- I don't know! But I do know that the very thought of such has given me a great deal of strength to persevere, in times when I've really needed it! ***God be praised, now and forever!***

WHY MUST WE BE IN CHRIST FOR THE ASSURANCES OF “PHYSICAL SECURITY?”

Matt.6:24-34

INTRODUCTION:

So that there’s no question in anyone’s mind, notwithstanding the substance of the lessons already delivered preceding this one, let me state it unequivocally and categorically, *I believe in the SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER!* **HOWEVER, let me hasten to add that I DON’T BELIEVE** in the Calvinistic perception of “once saved, always saved,” but **I DO believe** those bible truths that assure us that our HEAVENLY FATHER is mindful of our PHYSICAL NEEDS, and takes measures to sustain us, *both physically and spiritually,* by directing us into judicious actions that will benefit us both here and eternally.

[Read text]

I’m not here to tell you that God is going to make you RICH and SMART and GOOD LOOKING if you’ll just become a Christian. One quick look around us would certainly disprove such a notion as that, now wouldn’t it? BUT I DO WANT TO IMPRESS YOU WITH THE FACT that God is aware of our circumstances every hour we’re here on earth, and is suiting out changes for us, as we keep His will, that will ennure to our best and highest rewards in His eternal Kingdom!

I. GOD PROMISING BLESSINGS TO US IN THE PHYSICAL REALM IS NOT ONLY CONSISTENT WITH HIS NATURE, BUT ALSO SHOWS HIS INTEREST IN ALL FACETS OF OUR EXISTENCE!

A. Man is a dual-nature being, and God is the author and ruler of both!

1. When God made man He formed him out of the dust of the earth and *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life!”*
 - a) Man has both a physical nature, which is temporary because it returns to the dust, and a spiritual nature, which is the eternal part of man.
 - b) MAN MUST YIELD TO each standard of rightness and consistency with God’s creation or suffer the consequences of violation!
2. God, as Creator, set the rules [LAWS, if you please] upon which His natural realm [NATURE] operates. MAN WAS NOT GIVEN THE RIGHT TO MAKE HIS OWN LAWS!
 - a) The laws of nature are so exact and so consistent and so unchangeable by man that we have learned to **PREDICT** the *weather*, and *eclipses*, and even *comets* streaking through the sky
 - b) There are great benefits for us when we respect and work within the realm of God’s authority.

B. When we’re trying to LIVE FOR GOD, and He grants us physical blessings, or when WE ASK FOR physical blessings, are we expecting MIRACLES TO BE NECESSARY to bring about these divine ratifications?

1. FOR INSTANCE, have you ever prayed for RAIN? Were you praying for a MIRACLE? Of course not! But, did you really comprehend what you were praying for? PROBABLY NOT! Simplistically, you were praying that--
 - a) A low pressure area would develop where you are.
 - b) In order for this to happen there would have to be heat or some other motivating factor to cause the air to start rising.
 - c) Winds would start as air moved from a higher pressure area into that low pressure area. [Which came first? The low pressure area or the wind?] **I DON’T KNOW!**
 - d) Winds from the HP area would carry clouds into your LP area.

- e) HOPEFULLY, those clouds would be from tropical areas that contained moisture.
 - f) Again, hopefully, the moisture would stay in those clouds till they got over your area and then fall on your lands.
2. I DEFINITELY DON'T UNDERSTAND ALL THAT! DO YOU?
 3. Let me ask it again: HAVE YOU EVER PRAYED FOR RAIN? WERE YOU PRAYING FOR A MIRACLE?

II. SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEAVENLY FATHER AND HIS KINGDOM, ASSURANCES AND GIFTS FROM GOD AND HIS PEOPLE HELP US IN OUR DAILY PHYSICAL LIVES!

A. Realize that God blesses all mankind with certain manifestations of His love:

1. The gift of Jesus was for the saving of ALL sinners & maintaining ALL Christians. Jno.3:16
2. Gospel is explaining and brings the salvation of the Lord to all: Mk.16:15-16; 1 Cor.15:1-3.
3. And His sun and His rain are for both the righteous and the unrighteous: Matt.5:45

B. But there are some special considerations for those who abide in His will:

1. We have the concern of godly people; *even the apostle Paul rejoiced over this!* - Phil.4:10- *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.”*
2. We receive the care of loving Christians - 4:18- *“But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”*
3. A level of physical prosperity will follow after our spiritual condition has improved - 3 Jno.2- *Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers*
4. Part of that physical prosperity can definitely be a direct result of our spiritual efforts: [It is NOT an absolute in every situation, but is more like an axiom or proverb.] 2 Cor.9:10-11- *“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”*
 - a) God will bless us physically - Phil.4:19- *“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* Psa.37:25- *“I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread.”*
 - 1) He even taught his disciples to PRAY for daily bread - Matt.6:11
 - 2) And He urges us TO NOT WORRY about clothing - Matt.6:28-30- *“And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?”*
 - b) Physical relationships will be more meaningful and rewarding as a result of a right-standing with God and His people.
 - 1) We'll feel better about justice, fair play and impartiality when in transactions or arrangements with our fellow men.
 - 2) We'll be able to enjoy better relationships at home with our spouse and children!
 - 3) And with a godly attitude in all our efforts even confrontations with *“inconsiderate”* people won't be so upsetting and bothersome to our inner self.
 - c) Even our mental health will be better!

- 1) We have confidence in our actions for God and so are more pleased to abide in His teachings - **Phil.4:9**- *“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; **and the God of peace shall be with you.**”*
 - 2) We’re assured that God hasn’t forgotten us, that He’s still mindful of our needs - **1 Pet.5:7**.
- C. **A mature relationship with God results in not only knowing WHO we are, but also in appreciating the sensation of WHOSE we are!** **Psa.55:22**- *Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.*
1. How can we KEEP FROM FEELING an aura of delight when we’re part of a family that has the **most meaningful assets**, the **most godly members**, the **most secure inheritance**, and the **most assurance of success?**
 - a) Jesus offers a PEACE the world cannot give to calm the troubled heart. **Jno.14:27**- *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”*
 - b) The WORDS of Christ inspire JOY WITHIN US to lift our spirits out of any depression. **Jno.15:11**- *“These things I have spoken to you, **that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.**”*
 - c) He also offers to those who follow Him the ABIDING LOVE OF GOD, which can cast out fear! **Jno.15:9**- *“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”*
1 Jno.4:18- *“There is no fear in love; but **PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR**, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”*
 2. By being IN CHRIST, the Lord has included us as a part of the FAMILY OF GOD, which becomes a more meaningful and consequential relationship that even our PHYSICAL family! **Mk.10:28-30**.

III. THERE ARE DEFINITIVE EFFECTS IN THE PHYSICAL REALM FOR ONE WHO HAS A CLEAR AND CLEAN CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD, THAT ARE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP STATUS!

- A. While we are still IN THE FLESH, the Lord has PROMISED TO BE WITH US, in passages like **Matt.28:18; 18:20; Jno.14:15, 23**.
 1. It ISN’T JUST, *“When you die you can be with the Lord!”* --**even as IMPORTANT as that is!**
 2. **WE ARE WITH THE LORD NOW, and HE is WITH US, NOW!**
 3. Whatever physical blessings can accrue to people who are **constantly with the Lord** are OURS TO ENJOY, simply because we are IN CHRIST!
- B. It isn’t a NEW CONCEPT that physical blessings will follow the activities of righteousness in our lives! And God’s promises in this regard are not “ABSOLUTES,” but more like an **adage** or an **aphorism** or a **platitude!**
 1. Sometimes there are certain CONDITIONS that determine or alter situations.
 - a) Remember, it would have only taken the righteousness of TEN PEOPLE for God to have PHYSICALLY SPARED the city of Sodom. **Gen.18:32; 19:24**.
 - b) Rahab HID THE SPIES and God saved HER and her HOUSE from destruction that came upon the rest of the people of Jericho -- but **Rahab and her family** had to be in the right place at the right time, DIDN’T THEY? **Josh.6:17, 25; Heb.11:31**- *“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace!”*
 2. Paul was a man who was FEELING GOOD about the circumstances of his relationship with the Lord, but do you remember that all the while he was writing to the Philippians, **HE WAS IN JAIL!**

3. And PLEASE, all of us need to COMPREHEND how wonderful it is to have such blessed promises from the Lord -- *EVEN IF* we don't know all about them or HOW they work! cf. Matt.6:33.

- a) Do you believe Matt.6:33? How about Rom.8:28? Can you even begin to explain them?
- b) And even while I can't fully explain it, I still believe that our physical well-being (health) is certainly helped greatly by a confidence of attitude resulting from a right relationship with God. [we have better sleep, health, digestion, etc., with fewer headaches or other problems that come as a result of stress and anxiety]

CONCLUSION:

GOD is in control of His universe! But in His awesome wisdom and fearful power He has made MANKIND responsible for ourselves, the outcome of which is determined by how we respond to His love and concern for us! He gives us an awareness of our status through continued blessings [things that are good for us - NOT JUST things we like] as He urges us on to higher plateaus of development of both our physical abilities and also our spiritual maturity!

You can be SURE God loves you! You can be CERTAIN He continues to watch after you! And friend, you can be CONFIDENT of the eternal life He has promised you. And it's ALL predicated on your being IN CHRIST! It is THOSE IN CHRIST to whom God has focused all His Gracious Promises of Blessings concerning forgiveness and salvation, and we get INTO Christ by accepting and obeying His Precious Will. Rom.6:17-18- "*God be thanked, that tho you WERE S.of S...*" And the assurance we have: Rom.8:16-17- "*The Spirit Himself beareth witness...*"