

LOOKING INTO THE REARVIEW MIRROR

A JOURNEY OF LIFE

By

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All Scripture references in this writing are taken from
the Authorized King James Version

Preface

It is the desire of my heart that my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ receive the proper praise and adoration He so justly deserves from this work, for without His touch it would not be possible to perform. I praise Him for the inspiration He has given me to put into words the thoughts He has laid on my heart to lift up the heavy hearted and give direction to those that are placed across my path. I praise Him for the burden I have for others.

For each person that has accepted Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, life should be a long, exciting, and adventuresome journey. I have found myself and others around me discouraged and cast down by misconceptions about God's will for our lives. We are individuals that God has chosen for a specific duty in the Kingdom of God. But we often wonder "what specifically am I here for" and "what does God want me to do." I hear people make the statement that they are looking for the "perfect" will of God. It is my desire to explore that very thought and expound upon the differences of God's "permissive" will, God's "divine" will, and God's "perfect" will upon our lives. It is a large task but I believe God would have us to journey down this road for a while, and discover some very interesting concepts about the Lord God we humbly serve. God be praised for His glory and majesty. I am so deeply humbled that He chose me to be an instrument to encourage and embolden the Church that is so precious to Him, the "Pearl of Great Price."

Evangelist Albert G. Pollock

SECTION I



**DESIRING
GOD'S WILL**

God's Permissive Will

«³⁵Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.» Matthew 22:35-40

As a young teenage boy I was enthralled by the classic cars. At sixteen my Dad purchased for me my first “old car.” It was the summer of 1970. I commuted back and forth from high school and had never noticed it before, but that particular day “it” caught my eye and my desire was to have “it.” “It” was a 1947 Chevrolet Sedan with a beautiful “T” grille with all the chrome trimming. I instantly fell overboard for it; I had found my heart’s desire. I had a great time exploring the interior and discovering all the hidden compartments and gadgets. Upon shifting the three-speed on the column, I discovered it was a vacuum assisted shift. At the time, I didn’t have a clue what that meant but, I knew that it really added character to my Classic. You should have seen me; I was a sight to behold. I would drive down the highway at a blistering 40 mph, the old inline six just screaming. Because it was geared so low, it created an unusual amount of engine whine and whirl that took some getting use to. I really enjoyed driving that old car with its six-foot long, black, shiny hood and not to mention the Chevrolet hood ornament that projected outward another three inches. I think we can all get the picture by now that I was really swept off my feet with this new found toy.

I soon found myself in need of backing the car in somewhat tight spaces. I had already identified the rearview mirror, but never really understood its real value, which I felt wasn't much. As I attempted to back, I would strain to see all I could to avoid a collision with the garbage cans and other cars parked nearby. To my surprise, I found that a mirror about the size of a candy bar wasn't going to be very helpful in this crucial matter of backing safely. It was at this point that I was forced to throw my right arm back and hold onto the back of the seat and strain to look out of the back glass. Wow! I could see a whole lot more with that maneuver. As I pulled onto the road I remembered hearing that ole saying, "hindsight is 20/20."

«²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.» Romans 8:26-28

I was saved (born again) by the grace of God in 1964 under the preaching of Pastor Jerry Rowe in a little country church located in Newport, North Carolina, just a few miles from my home town of Morehead City. I was ten years old. I had a desire to serve the Lord from the very beginning of my Christian youth and I knew the Lord gave me that desire. I didn't know much Scripture, but I did read my Bible from time to time. I didn't learn the importance of reading my Bible daily until later in my life. I didn't know about the "permissive" will of God until I entered Bible College in 1996. Let's face it; I didn't know very much at all about spiritual things. Some people catch on very quickly; others, like myself, take a little longer.

You might ask me about what happened to the old car? Like so many other new found toys, the luster faded with the dull paint job. I let it go along with so many other “things” that entered my life. At the time, I didn’t understand the term “spiritual warfare” nor did I realize Satan was tripping me on anything he could throw in my path. I loved the Lord, but in my ignorance it never dawned on me that God had a personal plan for me, and it didn’t include “classic cars.” We don’t realize that we can operate in the permissive will of God yet not be in the divine will of God.

Like most young people, I thought I had to make my mark in the world, as I was taught by the grownups around me. I grew up with the understanding that I was to get a job and start supporting myself and later on, a wife. It never once dawned on me to confer with God about any of my plans and I felt that I wasn’t doing so badly. However, I knew down deep in my heart that God was there and He was keeping an eye on me, so to speak. But to really acknowledge the fact that He was in charge of me and orchestrating each day never entered my mind. I wasn’t aware that it was He that blessed me with good health everyday and gave me the abilities to perform duties required by my employers. I thought that God was just watching over me and I was doing the rest to the best of my ability. I thought I was doing so well that pride began to creep in and even got a little “cocky.” As the years passed by, I grew cold and indifferent towards the Lord and rarely regarded His presence.

In 1972, I was 18 and fresh out of high school. My new wife and I were (partially) faithful to the local church. The church wanted to place me from time to time in different capacities of service, but never did because I couldn’t make up my mind to remain faithful in attendance. I would experience times of great devotion to the Lord and really make things right

with Him. Then there would be times of cooling off and getting distant. I was running a masterpiece rollercoaster ride with the Lord. In 1974, He began bearing down on me about getting serious in my service to the church. I would make it a point to pray to God in the middle of the night and promise Him I would do anything He wanted me to do, just give me peace of heart once more. One Sunday morning as I was walking out of the church from the morning service, I felt the hand of God upon me. The sensation was so intense I felt I was being crushed right there on the sidewalk. I couldn't get to the car fast enough and made a beeline to the house. My wife thought I was "losing it" and couldn't understand what was wrong with me. I wasn't about to tell her that God was calling me into His service to preach. I was so overwhelmed with emotion; I could barely function without making a fool of myself around my wife. This just couldn't be happening to me; anything Lord but preach!

From then on, I made it a point to dodge anyone that had anything to do with the church. You just don't know how badly I wanted to get out from under the calling of God. You see, if there is to be any reasoning here, I was under the impression that it was I who had to perform the duties expected of me. I had never been a preacher before and I wasn't aware that it would be God working in me and thru me to accomplish His will for my life. Up to this point, I was under the impression that I was doing everything and God was just watching. There again, this shows my lack of Bible reading and misunderstanding in what it means to be "bought out." I was such a spiritual baby. I must say, that I made it a point to run from God for a long time, operating solely in God's permissive will but, completely out of His divine will. He was so gracious, loving, and longsuffering with me even when I was at my worst and deserved nothing but God's divine judgment, which was to come later.

«⁵And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. ¹²Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; ¹³And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.» Hebrews 12:5-13

No doubt, I was in line for an attitude adjustment and rightly so, for I had wedged my life into an all-time low, not to mention the anguish and distraught I was causing my wife watching me everyday in rebellion against God. I had hit the bottom.

For lack of knowledge of the Word of God, I was unaware of the sovereignty and providential care that God administered to me as the need arose. I was always trying to find a way to provide for myself by granting what my flesh desired and thought that was sufficient. I didn't understand what the love of God meant and entailed outside the saving of the soul. I was under the impression that once I was saved, we just went on our way

and made the best of our life here on earth. This way of thinking is shared by so many born again believers. It is proof positive in one's outward life that they are spiritual babies and have a sincere need for the milk of the Word of God.

«²As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby: ³If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.» I Peter 2:2-3

No one seems to want to learn what God desires from us now that we claim Him as Lord and Savior of our life. I for one know that I didn't at the time for I considered myself self-sufficient.

«¹⁹Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ²²The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. ²⁵Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ²⁶Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ²⁷Which of you

*by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
28And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the
lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do
they spin: 29And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in
all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
30Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field,
which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven,
shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
31Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?
Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be
clothed? 32(For after all these things do the Gentiles
seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have
need of all these things. 33But seek ye first the kingdom
of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall
be added unto you. 34Take therefore no thought for the
morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the
things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil
thereof.» Matthew 6:19-34 †*

You Are Bought With a Price



I am reminded of the story of Balaam the prophet of Israel, found in the book of Numbers. Balaam was constantly badgered by Balak, the king of Moab, to help with the demise of the great camp of Israel. King Balak had heard of what the children of Israel (almost two million strong) were capable when they marched thru a country. Balak was petrified of this and knew what it meant for Moab. King Balak sent emissaries to the prophet's tent to convince him to listen to the King's reasoning and commit treason against Israel. King Balak tried to bribe the prophet with many things such as wealth, honor, and position just to name a few. King Balak's primary request of the prophet was to place a curse upon Israel; thereby comforting the King in knowing their demise would soon follow and thus secure the land of Moab.

«Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.» Numbers 22:6

The story behind the story is not what transpired with King Balak and the land of Moab, but what transpired between the prophet Balaam and God. You see, the prophet had forgotten his first love; the calling God had

placed upon him many years before. What develops next is the prophet finding a loop-hole in God's command to not go with the prince's that King Balak sent to coax the prophet into returning with them. The prophet's disobedience really stirs God's anger. God is now forced to deal with His own.

The children that I teach from time to time really enjoy the portion about the talking donkey. I encourage you to read it and see for yourself what God will do to get His child's attention.

«²¹And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. ²²And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. ²³And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. ²⁴But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. ²⁵And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. ²⁶And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. ²⁷And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. ²⁸And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? ²⁹And Balaam said unto the ass, because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

³⁰And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, nay. ³¹Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. ³²And the angel of the LORD said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: ³³And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. ³⁴And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displeases thee, I will get me back again.»
Numbers 22:21–34

It is really hard to believe someone could be that hard-headed as to provoke God into something He doesn't care about doing in the first place – disciplining His child. The entire time I was reading and contemplating on this scripture, I couldn't help but ask myself, what is it going to take to turn you around Balaam? In the scripture I see God intervening, giving a constant battery of commands to the angel with the sword in his hand. The angel is doing everything in his power to obey God and not physically lay hands on the persistently disobedient prophet. What control; what meekness; there was absolutely no inhibition on the part of the angel. This is a wonderful example of the graciousness of God towards His child. Almighty God is a wonderful Father that isn't overcome with the furious emotions that plague you and me. Here we can see that God is a God of righteousness, holiness, and in control of every situation.

You ask, Brother Albert, what does all this have to do with me? I hope it

doesn't have anything to do with you personally, but it has everything to do with a child and his Father. You see, the prophet Balaam isn't the only one that has demonstrated disobedience and unfaithfulness towards God. There was a time in my life that I was the disobedient son. In the story of Balaam being confronted by the Angel of God, there was one portion of the scripture that had a real bearing on my heart. It said; ***"behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me."*** And that my friend was why I felt guilty. I had left my first love and had forgotten my calling as a child of God. I had wandered away from God and found myself entangled in the ways of the world. I didn't understand I had been "bought with a price" with the precious blood of Christ Jesus. I cannot believe I was so immature in Christ as to ignore all of His warnings. The entire time I was running from God, one particular verse of scripture kept ringing in my mind's ear.

«¹⁹What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.» I Corinthians 6:19-20

In March of 1976, God issued His first warning to an unfaithful son. Involved in an accidental shooting accident, I was in the Forsyth Hospital for two weeks. While hospitalized, Pastor Bobby Roberson and his son Steve visited me. I was happy to see them for my wife's sake but I surely did not want to have anything to do with them. I was under conviction.

However, I did not heed the Lord's warning and continued running as soon as I was able. I was blessed that I did not lose my leg. However, I was in a leg cast for nine months and out of work for one year because of that

accident. In my arrogance, I was unknowingly testing God's grace and longsuffering towards me.

After healing from the accident, I decided to go into the trucking industry. I was surprised that God would allow this move and always suspicious in my heart of how far God would allow me to go. Believe me, I went in any direction as hard and as fast as I could go. After driving a tractor-trailer for a few years, God issued another warning.

In January 1981, while traveling through the state of Delaware, I was hit head on by a drunk driver. He was killed instantly when my tractor drove across the top of his car at 50 mph. My tractor was totaled but I walked away with only a bad limp. After my release from the hospital in Wilmington, Delaware, I returned home to find my wife and parents begging me to get things right with the Lord and stop running. By this time, everyone knew God had His hand on me, but for a reason that only I knew.

I continued in the trucking industry for some years to come except in different capacities. Driving had become "sour grapes" to me following the accident. It was during these last few years that I began to notice my health deteriorating. The harder I tried, it seemed the slower I became. I started changing jobs more often, always taking a pay cut, just to stay busy. Down deep inside, I knew my time was running out. I was eventually forced to sit with my boss and try to explain to him that I could no longer perform my duties as a marine mechanic in Morehead City, my old hometown.

In November 1995, I was stricken with severe arthritis in my lower back and became bedridden, partially paralyzed from the waist down. God had me exactly where He wanted me. I did not realize at that time my wife, Sue,

was secretly meeting with a lawyer. Drawing up divorce papers to take my children and leave, she had taken all the abuse and recklessness she could stand. *What's it going to take to turn you around, Albert?* I thank God He never allowed her to leave. We will celebrate our 34th wedding anniversary later this year to the Glory of God.

On April 26, 1996, I finally came to my senses and fully surrendered to the Lord. As time went forth, I was restored with both my physical health and happiness. For the first time in twenty years I could honestly say, "it was well with my soul." I gladly picked up the Cross and remain today determined by the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As I look back across the years, (i.e. the rearview mirror), I can see by the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding imparted to me by my Lord that He had enrolled me into an expensive institution of higher learning, "The School of Hard Knocks." My life was literally hanging in the balance. **«...There is a sin unto death...» I John 5:16**

I now see my Lord knew what it was going to take to get me mentally, spiritually, and physically ready to perform the duties that lie ahead, as He makes no mistakes.

I do not believe there is any such thing as wasted years; it takes as long as it takes for the individual. I am reminded many times that I have been chosen by God's will and am truly honored to serve the rest of my time to Him in all humility.

Romans 8:28 became real and a part of me. I can see clearly that God was allowing Satan to buffet me to wear off those jagged edges and to polish my

character through experience. Hindsight is indeed 20/20. My Lord truly chose me, broke me, and is continuing with His process of making me into a vessel of mercy unto His honor and glory.

«¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.» Philipians 3:13-14 †

Why Is Un-Confessed Sin and Sanctification An Issue?



«In the year that king Uzziab died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ²Above it stood the seraphim's: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. ⁴And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.» Isaiah 6:1-5

The holiness of God is quite beyond our human realm of understanding, to say the least. The only way we can get a glimpse of His holiness is by reading His Word whereby He divulges clues in bits and pieces. God is so gracious to want to share this knowledge about Himself for He does love us and desires us to draw closer to Him thru knowledge and understanding. This unction or anointing only comes by the way of God's Holy Spirit in which God purposely discloses to His child. An un-saved person can never understand these things about God, unless it is intended to enlighten the individual to his or her salvation.

«But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural (un-saved) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.»
I Corinthians 2:9-14

In the previous portion of scripture found in Isaiah, we get an understanding that King Uzziah has died and the country was in deep depression because of the loss. Uzziah had reigned as King of Judah for 52 years or since he was sixteen years old, (II Chronicles 26:3) and the people were very dependent upon him.

God revealed Himself to Isaiah to remind him that God is always near and on the Throne. Isaiah had lost his focus on God and found himself consumed by his circumstances. Here it is also taught for man to remember his place in the sight of God.

God reveals Himself to man, as man presents himself to God. In other words, Isaiah found himself overwhelmed by his circumstances; God overwhelmed Isaiah with His presence.

When Isaiah found himself in the presence of God, he saw himself as

unclean and vile, as only any mortal being can do. It is this very concept that makes humanity uncomfortable in the presence of God. Mankind desires to feel good about himself and strives to lift himself up. However, when God appears on the scene, all the hopes, dreams, and self-aspirations are dashed upon the rocks (remember Judas Iscariot?). In our day and time this is known as humanism, the stuff in which atheists believe. Man desires to believe in something so why not believe in one's self. Sound familiar?

«¹³For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.» Isaiah 14:13-14

As a young boy, I wasn't aware of the holiness of God until the day He began to reveal Himself to me thru the Word of God. Until that time, I only viewed God as a distant, out-of-sight celestial being that was out of touch with me. Why would I believe the God of the universe would want to fellowship with me? Almighty God; the Creator that observes from millions of light-years across distant galaxies, who maintains His creation by thought, who interacts with creation to make known His intended desire upon the individual. When the time was come, He wanted me to know that He knows me. He is not a stalker, but an observer that is interested in me, comes to me, and makes His presence known to me. It was remarkable to discover His interest in me, for when I discovered in the Bible that God knows me and loves me personally, it was unnerving to say the least, and began to raise questions for me. Because of the shame and guilt of sin that weighed heavily upon me, I was confused and asked "why and how can God have anything to do with me?" I discovered through reading God's Word that I am not here by chance, but by design.

«¹O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. ²Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. ³Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. ⁴For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. ⁵Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. ⁷Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. ¹²Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. ¹³For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. ¹⁵My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. ¹⁶Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. ¹⁷How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! ¹⁸If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.» Psalms 139:1-18

This passage of scripture deals with the omnipresence of God. The reality is that we are all in the presence of God. However, so consumed with our environment and cares of life, we tend to forget and even ignore that God is continuously observing us and His sovereignty is engaged whether or not

we are aware. This is why God revealed Himself to Isaiah in such a way as to startle him and basically say to him, “Isaiah, wake-up, snap out of it, don’t you realize it is I that you have to deal with?” Again, God was basically telling Isaiah thru the demonstration of His power and majesty that God was, and is, in control; not man, no matter to what height he might attain.

Another purpose for God’s extravagant yet holy demonstration of the heavenly scene was to let Isaiah see himself as God saw Isaiah. When the realization and the impact of his humanity and human frailty were revealed to him, it boggled his mind. Isaiah’s first words were ***“woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips.”***

Isaiah had a desire to serve God but found himself too heavily burdened to function as God would have him function. You ask; “what does this have to do with un-confessed sin?” To be able and ready for the service of God, Isaiah had to first deal with his sin. God has saved every born-again, blood washed, child of God to SERVE. Saved, sanctified and service bound is God’s purpose for every child of God; NO exemptions!

«Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. ⁶Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.» Isaiah 6:5-8

It wasn't a fact of great atrocious sin; it wasn't a fact of gross sin of any sort. SIN, no matter how great or small we deem in our eyes is abhorred in God's eyes. Sin is abominable to God.

«This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.»
I John 1:5-10

Our earthly walk in life constantly bombards us with evil. Mankind is saturated with evil. It has been this way since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There again, it is hard to comprehend the holiness of God but remember, it is God we have to deal with, not man. Man will accept you as you are, for he too suffers the same blight of sin. However, God is Holy and righteous, pure as silver refined seven times.

«¹³Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. ¹⁷And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass

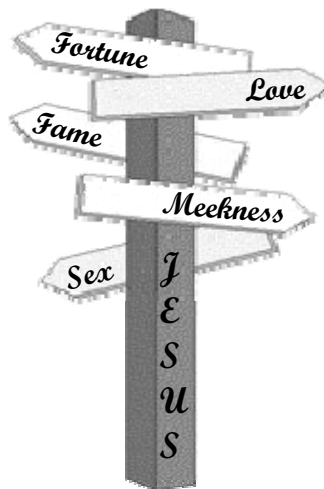
ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: ²³Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ²⁴For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.»
I Peter 1:13–25

This is His goal for you and me. It is God's desire to see His reflection in you. God has set your mandate. †

Why Is Separation From The World An Issue?

«¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.» II Corinthians 6:14-18

There is a word that comes to my mind that I believe is worth exploring – the word compromise. Fundamental preachers of today use this word as a



platform to launch fiery messages to weak Christians. I consider myself a fundamental preacher. If there is one thing God detests, it is a child of God that will not take a stand for what they know in their heart is truth. I sincerely believe if your source of knowledge came from God's Holy Word with Holy Ghost conviction to reinforce the emphasis upon the Word, you Christian, are obligated to blow the trumpet from the roof tops. Let us look at the definition of the word

compromise. The word compromise does not come from the Bible but from 20th century terminology. Webster's Dictionary, College Edition defines compromise as "a settlement in which each side gives up some demands or makes concessions; or, an adjustment of opposing principles, systems, etc."

A good example of this is the "Purpose Driven Church" of today which claims to be "seeker sensitive" to lost people. A paraphrased statement I recently read, "The services cannot function properly without lost people in the congregation" comes to mind. I feel I must refrain from using the pastor's name that made the statement; however, he is as popular in today's society as he is radical in his beliefs. We must remember; although the world embraces the radical thinking of today's society, God deems it as rebellion to His Word.

I would like to inject some important biblical facts here at this point. First of all, with this kind of reasoning, they now have the excuse to need different versions of bibles. At this point, I am compelled to state my uncompromising belief regarding the Bible; the Authorized King James Version is the *ONLY* version to be the true and living Word of God. Secondly, it is impossible for lost people to *worship* God. Thirdly, it is impossible for lost people to *understand* the Word of God. Last but not least, it is impossible for lost people and saved people to have fellowship in the local assembly; the reason for the need of *neutral ground* or as is it known in today's society, "family life centers." God never intended for His chosen people to mingle with the world; especially when we are to assemble together on the appointed day of Sunday in reverence, honor, and respect of the day our Lord and Savior rose victoriously from the grave. That is why we, as born-again Christians are called the "CHURCH," the "called out."

Another word I would like to turn our focus to would be “worldly.” This is a biblical word that is directed at professing Christians that wandered away from their first love – Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the definition of the word worldly. Webster’s Dictionary, College Edition, defines worldly as being “of this world; temporal or secular; or, opposed to heavenly, spiritual, ecclesiastical, etc.; devoted to or concerned with the affairs, pleasures, etc.” I could go on but there is no need; I’m sure we get the picture. The Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionary elaborates on the definition as being used in two senses; literally - mundane; or, figuratively – corrupt.

Not all, but most Christians today believe that to be accepted by the world is “ok” by God. For me, that can be compared to walking on a narrow ledge of a twenty story building without losing your footing, with everything going on around you to get your attention off of what you are so desperately needing to focus. In other words, you are gambling with your testimony, your family, your income, your job, your home, your health, and shall I say, your marriage. It proves in one’s life that they do not take God’s warning serious enough to refrain from rubbing elbows with the world. We forget God saved us out of the world. It is possible to live “in” the world and not be “of” the world.

«¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.» Titus 2:11-14

«¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.» I John 2:15-17

I just gave the definitions of two words; one is found in the Bible and the other is the result of ignoring the Bible. Worldliness leads into compromise. You might say, “Brother Albert, I would not get so close to the world as to compromise.” Allow me to expound on compromise with some examples. If you do not take the time to spend with God in prayer in the privacy of your home, you have already succumbed to compromise. If you do not have the time to read God’s Word in the privacy of your home, you have already succumbed to compromise. If you do not have a set time for the family to come together for evening devotions (old time family altar), you have succumbed to compromise. If you and your family do not see the importance to attend church, you and your family have succumbed to compromise. I could go on, but I believe you get the gist of compromise by now.

Dear Christian, (the term Christian is defined as being Christ-like), anything that enters your life and ultimately detours you from your devotion, love, and service to your LORD, the Bible describes as worldly. Thus that Christian is guilty of compromise.

«From whence [come] wars and fighting's among you? [Come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members? ²Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts. ⁴Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. ⁵Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? ⁶But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. ⁹Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.» James 4:1-10

In the previous chapter we dealt with un-confessed sin and sanctification. So it is only befitting that we continue the progressive demise of the Christian who doesn't feel it necessary to remain clean in the sight of God. Un-confessed sin leads into worldliness; worldliness leads into compromise. Dear Christian, if you have forgotten your calling, I want to remind you that you were called out of this world when you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

«But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰Which in time past

[were] not a people, but [are] now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.» I Peter 2:9-10

It is important that we look at the word “sanctified.” To be sanctified is to be “set apart,” and that is exactly what the Lord performed for you and me. We are to live in this world and use this world for the glory of God, but we are to *never* assimilate with the world.

«To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.» Acts 26:18

«And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.» I Corinthians 6:11

I personally have a hard time accepting the fact that a Christian will actively enter the political arena. I am convinced that it will only be a matter of time until Satan presents them with the opportunity to compromise. The world’s foundation consists of compromise.

«A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.» James 1:8

I am reminded of the portion of scripture where the Apostle Paul is longing for fellowship and thinking of his brothers in Christ; one in particular stands out in his mind.

«For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.» II Timothy 4:10

Dear Christian, your compromise hurts your brothers and sisters in Christ. It hurts your co-workers on the job. It hurts the local church. It hurts your family. It hurts you personally, and it hurts the Lord Jesus, the very one responsible for your health and welfare. When you let down your guard and become cold and indifferent to your calling in Christ Jesus, it hurts.

There is no doubt you have witnessed someone that has “fallen away” from the fellowship simply due to some pitfall Satan devised. Believe me, I know; I was that person some years ago. But today, I praise God for being merciful and longsuffering to me. I praise Him for bringing me back into the light and restoring me back to the family of God; the local Church. I am a witness that my God is in the salvage business and seeks out those that have made shipwreck. †



SECTION II



SEARCHING FOR GOD'S DIVINE WILL

Why Is Attending Church An Issue?

«²³Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised ;) ²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.» Hebrews 10:23-25

As long as I can remember, I was always attending church of some kind. I reflect on the days of my youth, in the early 60's, when my Mom would take me to church. There I would hear sounds and witness things that are associated solely with church. To me, church has always been an exceptional place and I say that with all reverence. My dear mother was not saved at the time but, from my own experience with the Holy Spirit, I now know that she was searching and longing for the peace of heart of which only the Holy Spirit can provide a person.

My mom was born and reared in the small town of Beaufort, North Carolina. A major tourist attraction of today, it was and remains the county seat of Carteret County located on North Carolina's eastern coast. She and her parents, my grandparents Leonard and Nellie Styron were of the Methodist faith and attended the town's large Methodist church. They lived just a few blocks away and would walk to the Sunday morning services each week.

As Mom has reflected to me upon her childhood, she often times shared her memories of those early church days when she would sing in the church choir as a little girl. She recalls leaving many of the morning services and

looking across the street at the Baptist church as they were leaving their services. The adults and children leaving that church carried Bibles; no one carried Bibles at the church she attended. Mom said she began to feel the need to carry God's Word with her, yet she never completely understood why. All that she knew was that she saw others doing it, so she simply followed their example. Her following of other Christians' examples only confirms the fact that we, as Christians today, may never know the full impact that a simple act of obedience will have on others that are watching us in unawares.

One day while exploring the church's graveyard, my mother stumbled across an infant's grave which my wife and I recall seeing many times while visiting the historical graveyard. The particular headstone was in the shape of a lamb and became my mother's "prayer closet." As a young girl, she would slip away to her private place to pray. Desperately searching for something or Someone, she knew there was something missing in her life. Although my mother knew of God at that time, she did not yet know God personally.

One fine day in 1964 a local preacher stopped by for a visit with Mom and Dad. I now know he was sent from God, for both of my parents accepted Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior that day. Our house instantly turned into a home and was never the same again. I continue to praise God for sending Pastor J.W. Long to our house that day and know my parents remember very well that day of salvation. I received Christ as my Savior later that same year during a summer revival at Holly Springs Freewill Baptist located in Newport, North Carolina.

I believe strongly and emphatically in the local church, and have always had a great love and respect for it. God instilled that quality in me when He

saved me. Yes, there were times I grew cold and indifferent, and did not attend church like I should. Nevertheless, that respect never completely faded away. God would not allow it to happen. It is God's will that all come to repentance and be restored to the House of Prayer.

I hear a lot of excuses from people who refuse to attend church and in the past, have even used some of these myself. Here are just a few examples; but not all by any means.

- I don't attend Church because they are so hypocritical.
- I don't like their style of singing. (Contemporary, country, operatic, etc.)
- I don't appreciate their dress code.
- I don't like the style of preaching I hear at that Church.
- The hours of service are not convenient for my schedule.
- The women don't wear pants and I don't feel comfortable in a dress.
- The preacher holds us too long.
- They don't have enough activities for the children.
- Their facilities are lacking and don't suit my needs.

The bottom line is that we as humans can find an excuse that is convenient to fit our every situation and circumstance. If we don't want to do something, it is too easy to find an excuse to justify our neglect. I could list a hundred excuses for not working in the ministry because of my need to work a full time job. I arrive promptly at my job everyday. I return home in the evening and begin work on the evangelistic ministry in which God has placed me. Recording messages for the website, proof-reading tracts and other material for the publisher, writing articles and books as God has inspired me to do, being ready to preach at a moment's notice, fulfilling my

obligation to others as a believer-priest by praying for them, encouraging others either by email, phone, or written correspondence to the prison ministry are just a few examples. And after all of this, I find myself attending the church services every Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night mid-week prayer meeting.

I am convinced our service to the Lord is a condition of the heart; a matter of love, or the lack thereof. That one word, love, describes the way in which we conduct ourselves. If you love ball games, you will support it with your money, time, and talents. If you love racing, you will support that with your money, time, and talents. It seems when we mention church, something inside of us snaps shut and closes every access to the heart. God Himself gives us the love and desire for the fellowship with our brethren. If we do not have that love and desire for our brethren's fellowship, something is wrong with our heart. Having a problem with the local church, no matter what we might use as an excuse, reveals our personal standing with God. In other words, our devotion, or lack thereof, to the Church is a temperature gauge or visual indicator that measures our love and obedience toward God for all to see.

«³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.» ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. ⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. ⁸Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the

darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. ⁹He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.» I John 2:3-11

We have no doubt every born-again Christian wants to know and experience God's will for their life. The sad reality about discovering God's will is that we want to side step the prerequisites that God demands from His child in order to be in line for promotion in the service of God. In other words, if we cannot be faithful with the little things God's expects from us, how can we be trusted with the larger, more dangerous aspects of ministry that would have a more devastating effect on the persons to which we are ministering? This fact only reveals how lightly we deem the responsibility that God places in our possession.

I remember in my early teens, I would always try to find an excuse to get behind the steering wheel of the family car, always hounding Dad to let me drive on the dirt roads. Where we lived in Carteret County there were quite a few dirt roads. The point I'm trying to make here is that I desired all the privileges of driving. Yet, I had not taken a drivers education class, received my learner's permit, and not to mention, earned my drivers license. The point here is, dear Christian, if you are missing out on attending services, not reading your Bible daily, or setting aside prayer time in your prayer closet (some place secluded), how can we expect our wonderful God and Savior to divulge His personal intentions for us? Wouldn't you agree with me that it would be foolish on your parent's part to give the keys to the family car to a young, inexperienced person with no training at all? You and

I as adults have no problem visualizing the disastrous results that would come from such an irresponsible judgment call. That is exactly what happens with a newly saved person does not have an understanding of the principles and doctrines of God's Holy Word, and another reason they are unstable in their beliefs. They have avoided all the classes and discarded the Book that contains all the answers of life.

«¹¹Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. ¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk [is] unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.»
Hebrews 5:11-14

Christians today that are looking for playtime and running from class time and instruction are the one's who will be ashamed at our Lord's appearing. The church was designed by God to be a designated place to fellowship with a designated people, to study under a designated man of God (pastor), who accepts the responsibility as your personal trainer or mentor. God makes him, as the pastor and shepherd of the flock, responsible for your spiritual growth and maturity.

«Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation" (walk in life).» Hebrews 13:7

***«Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.»
Hebrews 13:17***

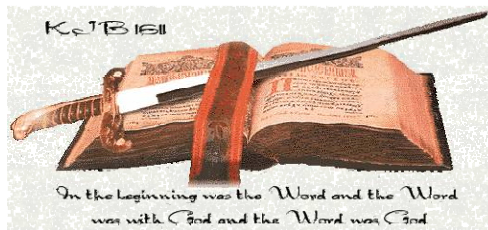
I want to personally encourage each individual reading this work to be faithful to the House of God. If you don't attend church, I encourage you to pray about finding a true Bible believing church with a sincere man of God, who refuses to compromise with the world. Uncompromising pastors today are becoming few and far between, but God still has His man out there. Between you and God searching together, you will find your place and then you will be in the center of God's divine will.

***«¹²Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.»
Philippians 2:12-13 †***

Why Is Reading the Bible So Important?

«¹²I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. ¹⁴I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. ¹⁵That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. ¹⁶I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. ¹⁷And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. ¹⁸For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.» Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Again, I am reminded of my youth as a grammar school student in Morehead City. From time to time my classmates and I would be assigned long-term reading projects. Throughout the school year, we would have to



read a set number of autobiographies, science fiction works, and accounts of historical events, novels, and so forth. From an early age I enjoyed reading and believe that to be the reasoning

behind my zeal for research in the ministry as an adult. Things I

encountered in my readings would many times stagger my thoughts as a child by introducing me into another realm of knowledge and definitely affect my attitude regarding the world around me. As an adult, I encounter readings today that will boggle the mind, especially in the technical realm of computer science and mechanics. Needless to say, Biblical history and reading is my all-time favorite. However, I must admit I have a genuine passion for studying history and assessing my newfound facts in chronological order. I find it thrilling to discover new information and seeing an untold story unearthed as new facts emerge from my research. I enjoy knowledge in all its aspects but that is all that it is; knowledge – entering into the realm of discovering and the realization of information and facts about subjects you previously knew nothing about. Knowledge will and does change a person’s method of perceiving certain subjects and I enjoy exploring the many different processes of the minds of others. It is from this standpoint that I come to a conclusion and develop my own personal opinion on many different subjects. However, at this point we have to realize all this knowledge pertains to the processes of the world and its economy.

The day I accepted Christ Jesus as my personal Savior, all of my “thinking” changed. My truckload of knowledge was upturned and the way I perceived the world became radically revamped. I was cognizant for the first time in my life that God had intervened in my education process. He had introduced me to His celestial world and His economy. I was formally introduced to the Word of God by the Holy Spirit. I have never known anything like this before although I had read numerous books on other religions and beliefs.

I believed in Christ Jesus by faith; not by something that I had read. This

process was achieved by my hearing the Word of God preached, the opening of my heart to receive His spoken Word, the planting of the seed of the Word into my heart, and the generating power of God's Holy Ghost permeating my very soul. For the first time in my life, the truth of all things struck a note in my mind and heart and I found it wasn't difficult to make a decision of that magnitude. The facts were overwhelming and the power of God was real. Through much soul searching and self-examination, I found myself lost, searching for knowledge, understanding, and above all, the absolute truth. People will attempt to disguise all types of theories, stories, and even old wives' tales for the truth. When God makes His presence known, everything has to flee in His presence.

You might ask, "Well, why is reading the Bible more important than reading other books?"

1Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. 2Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. 4Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. 7I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. 9Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. 10With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. 11Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. 12Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. 13With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15I will meditate in thy precepts, and

have respect unto thy ways. ¹⁶I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. ¹⁷Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. ¹⁸Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.» Psalms 119:1-18

The precious Word of God speaks for Himself. God wants to bless each and every one of us more than He does, but we hinder Him by not following thru with His desires upon us. Yes, the Lord God does bless us and He is merciful. When we ignore His Word and use our own judgment, it hurts His feelings and He will hold back His blessings, allowing us to perform on our own accord and reasoning. I realize from rearing my own children how badly I hurt when they do not heed my advice and learn from my past experiences. To see someone need something that I can offer to them freely out of my love and concern for them is discouraging. Isn't it wonderful that we cannot discourage God, our Heavenly Father, from helping us when we decline His advice?

When I asked the Lord into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior, He made a promise to me to never leave me or forsake me. I know there are times I have disappointed Him and He had every reason to walk away from me; redirect His efforts toward someone more deserving. I praise God He never gives up on me. He never gives up on any of His children. The Lord promises us peace, happiness, contentment, and wisdom if we will only read His Word daily. It is the mainstay of our spiritual diet. Without a doubt, I know of no one who does not have a desire for these things in his or her heart. These things can only come from God.✠

Why Is It So Important To Be A Member of A Local Church?

«For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, ²If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: ³How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: ⁷Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. ⁸Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ⁹And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: ¹⁰To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ¹¹According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: ¹²In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. ¹³Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. ¹⁴For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷That Christ

may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.» Ephesians 3:1-21

Brother J.W. Long was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Morehead City when my parents accepted the Lord as their Savior in May 1964. Soon after, I accepted the Lord as my Savior and we immediately followed the Lord in believer's baptism as a family. Even as a child, I enjoyed being a part of God's family and felt as if I was a part of something very big, although the actual church assembly was small. The Apostle Paul says that we, as born-again believers, are of "the same body," the Church. I will remember the Vacation Bible Schools and the monthly foot washings practiced during the services. These are wonderful memories that I will cherish always.

It is God's divine will that every one of His children attend a God fearing, Bible preaching church. You might ask why it is necessary to be a member of the church. I can give you a number of reasons. It proves to yourself that you do not have a problem obeying God because you love Him. You will subject yourself to anyone you love. It is an outward show of humility and devotion to God. It reveals you are in subjection to God's Holy Spirit and you are convinced in your heart that it is the right thing to do, according to the will of God.

Church is a place of nurturing and we find that through fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Together, we learn to worship God corporately in reverence and awe while witnessing the power of the Holy Ghost as He silently and gently maneuvers among the pews, dealing with people's hearts and minds. Your membership outwardly confirms to everyone associated with you that you believe in like manner with them. You do not have a problem supporting the local church with your time, talents, monetary support, or what ever the local assembly might be of need.

Let us reason of the world for a moment. Suppose you and I attended a meeting of any civic club for an evening because we felt we shared a common interest with them. We believed that by attending the meetings it would make us a better citizen to the community by gaining an understanding of their viewpoints and agenda for advancement. The main goal of each meeting is to have all people focus on one viewpoint in particular, thus placing us in a position to better serve our fellow man. Another goal would be to teach us to work together for the common good of everyone, regardless of our differences of opinion.

On a grander scale, each local club normally has associations with a parent organization, either on the regional and international level to enhance their influence. However, one very important aspect of the local club is to focus on the same subject in order to achieve the primary goal, what ever the specific goal might be. The more people the club involves, the more active the club can become, and the greater influence it can place upon the community. These clubs must be very well organized with responsible people that will lead by example and remain completely devoted to their cause. They give of their time, talents, and monetary support. They

assemble as a group often to brainstorm new ideas and their experiences. They follow a written statement of ideas and actions that express their devotion, drive, or ambition to achieve a particular cause, better known as a Charter. The Charter is used to initially inform each member of the club's purpose and right of assembling. They have nothing to hide as they encourage everyone that joins them; this is a worthy endeavor and one to be acknowledged by everyone in the community. We have their facts placed before us and receive the invitation to join with them, yet we hesitate.

They find it confusing when they witness our continued attendance and interest but remain apprehensive to joining. They begin their pursuit of us by questioning our reasons for not joining; what was our attraction to their group in the first place? They might question if we are in agreement with their goals and if not, why. The point is if you and I are going to associate ourselves with any organization, we should carefully consider any ramifications of joining with them. In other words, if we are not sincere in our pursuit of their organization and ultimate membership, why would we allow ourselves the hassle of their pursuit of us? We wouldn't.

We would be honest with both ourselves and others and search out solid and sound advice beforehand. We would make certain this membership would be a good choice for us personally. If you would not consider doing this in a civic club setting, why would you behave as such in a local church? This is the point of view that the local church is confronted with every service; although the church remains silent as not to offend anyone.

The difference between a civic club and a body of believers is the New Testament church is a stand-alone, living organism, ordained of God, and placed into community service for the glory of God. The club, on the other

hand, is not ordained of God but man-made and placed into community service for man's glory and recognition. As such, through the civic clubs, man has found a way to side step the local church and take all of the credit for his accomplishments. Personally, I believe the reason behind the civic club is because they do not have to acknowledge God nor answer to God. The civic club would not allow anyone to continue attending their meetings if they sensed the attendees were not serious about their cause. In fact, after about two or three meetings they probably would not be welcome at the meetings unless they outwardly displayed some type of assertiveness towards joining the organization. The club would not understand a lack of activity nor would they tolerate deadbeat members very long.

Civic clubs, along with many other organizations, have used many of the identical membership techniques copying the local Church and with good reason, it is very successful. No doubt, there are some worthy organizations that are very responsible to the community. The fact remains, they are not ordained of God. They do, however, use a very effective concept to operate a man made project. This concept in today's terms is known as "networking." That is why we have with us today many so-called "churches" when in fact they are nothing more than a social club. Satan has his counterfeits. It is getting harder for people to tell the difference between the civic clubs and the local church.

It is my personal experience as a pastoral candidate from time to time, the deacons of the church and/or the pulpit committee members are comfortable with their new-found role of leadership. To my knowledge, these churches are still operating without a pastor. We are living in the day that people are turning from sound preaching to convenient teaching. If the general membership pressures the pulpit committee long enough, they

will allow an interim pastor to remain as long as he desires to do so. So in turn, they will not be faced to submit themselves to a full-time pastor assuming full authority, as ordained by God.

Again, I stress the importance of attending a God fearing, Bible preaching church that has a God-called, full-time pastor. Beware of the hireling preacher! A true God-called pastor will be considerate of your spiritual well-being and other matters of the heart. Carefully weighing all of the facts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you must come to the conclusion that the church you are attending is genuine and of God. If this is the case of the church you attend, there should be no doubt as to what you need to do to continue in the will of God. Ask the Lord for guidance and direction. Bathe your request in prayer. God's precious Holy Spirit will lead you to the way to happiness in the local Church.✝

The Importance of Obedience and Faithfulness

«²¹This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. ²²It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. ²⁴The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. ²⁵The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. ²⁶It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.» Lamentations 3:21-26

My wife, Sue and I will be celebrating our 34th wedding anniversary this year, all praise, honor and glory be directed to the Son of God. You might wonder and ask, why would you make a statement like that? It isn't so hard to have a marriage and stay together as a couple for life, is it? I believe only married couples would understand the statement I just made.

There are many different things in life that motivate people. Despite what you might have heard, I don't show up at my job for health reasons. No doubt, I enjoy my job and that enjoyment helps to motivate me to perform better than if it was only for a matter of money. I work a full time job to support my home and wife but yet I also perform the ministry God has placed me into all day, everyday. I cannot say that I love my job, but I can say that I do appreciate it and thank God for it. In return, I perform my job to the very best of my God given abilities. On the other hand, I love my wife. We have a very special and different type relationship in comparison to my job relationship. Therefore, the motivation is much different than outside activities.

Many born-again Christians lack proper motivation. The world in which we live finds its basic motivation by human emotions such as greed, jealousy, lustful desire, hatred; basic ulterior motives for advancement in promoting one's self.

You ask, why didn't you mention love? True, there are isolated cases of love demonstrated among families and couples but, even at its best, I believe it is impossible for anyone to actually know and experience true love until one has received Christ Jesus into their heart. How can I believe so firmly in that statement? One example would be my own personal experiences. And another would be from the Word of God. God demonstrated His love toward us by giving us His only begotten Son that we might have eternal life.

«For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.» John 3:16

Not only did He give us His only begotten Son, but He lives inside of every born-again child of God to guide, teach, and comfort us in all walks of life. It is this love, the love of God, which constrains or restricts us. Have you ever heard the old song, "Your Love Has a Hold on Me?" I understand that it is a worldly song but a better statement could not be made concerning God and His hold on those who know Him personally. As I live from day to day, I grow spiritually in the Lord. I experience different things; for example, how to conduct myself in uncomfortable or extreme circumstances and situations involving others in the world. I experience learning how to love and appreciate others when they do not deserve love and how to keep on going when it doesn't seem necessary anymore. It is only by God's wonderful grace and love imputed to me or put to my

account, that I can be able to demonstrate grace and love towards another person. Without that grace, I would not be capable to perform everyday with love in my heart if God did not first dispense it to me Himself. Being human, I have days that I don't feel like loving and caring, but it is the love of God in me which motivates me and encourages me to go that extra mile just for Him. It requires proper motivation to consistently perform.

I can proclaim without a doubt that I love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, and mind. However, without His constant barrage of love and grace towards me, I would find it so easy to grow cold and indifferent, like so many of us are guilty of towards our spouses.

On September 2nd, 1972, I made a vow before God and man that I would love, cherish and honor my young wife for the rest of my life here on earth. By the grace and power of God, I am able to keep the vows I declared on that day. In July 1964, I was the one who accepted Christ Jesus as my personal Savior and accepted His vows toward me with love and compassion. He made a promise to comfort me when I need comforting, meet my every need, never leave me nor forsake me, and love me with an undying love, forever throughout eternity. He promised me eternal life with Him in His Kingdom of Heaven, to rule and reign with Him and be by His side.

Because I love my wife, the duty of faithfulness is easy to fulfill. Because I love my Lord, obedience to His wishes is my desire in life. Faithfulness to His will for my life is motivated by His love for me. He loves me so much and cares for me so intensely that I find myself consumed with fulfilling all that He asks of me with no inhibitions. I have to admit to you that it wasn't always this way.

Just like every newly married couple, my wife and I had (and still have) some trying times in our relationship. Relationships can be strained by economic pressures; even outside pressure from old friends and family. Early in the marriage, getting used to the person who just moved into your life and learning them personally in itself is pressure and anxiety; trying to please someone that you really don't know but thought you did. When it comes to your relationship with the Lord, it is basically the same. In the beginning, everything is new and wonderful. Then, reality settles into the picture and pressures from the world around you remind you, you are still in this world and have to fulfill its demands. For example, you have to make payments for a dwelling place, utility payments, get a job, or get and keep a better paying job in order to support your new wife, husband, and local church. I included the church because that is where the Lord will have you serve when you become His possession. There is no denying it. We are His possession, and our desire should be to fulfill His every desire. You would do no less for your spouse.

«¹⁹What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.» I Corinthians 6:19-20

I just want to remind all of us that we can perform all of our duties faithfully and with joy because the Lord is our sole provider. There is nothing He cannot do. As His child, He has gladly accepted the responsibility of our health and welfare for all time and eternity. Therefore, learn to enjoy the Lord and His presence at all times for He is always near, just like the spouse that you love so dearly.

«Michtam of David. Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I

put my trust. ²O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; ³But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. ⁴Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. ⁵The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. ⁶The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. ⁷I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. ⁸I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. ¹⁰For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ¹¹Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.» Psalms 16:1-11 †

Called to Do What?

«Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. ⁸It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.» Proverbs 3:5-8

I remember people beginning to question me while I was still in grade school, Albert what are you planning on doing with your life? I would give them some line of great aspiration but deep down, I didn't have a clue. Growing up in Carteret County during the early 60's was very hard. Jobs were few and many times closed to those who did not have "connections."



In other words, if you didn't have someone on the inside of an organization or company pulling for your employment, you might as well keep searching.

While in the 7th and 8th grade; my Dad assigned me the task of yard work; I was to keep the outside of our home "looking good." He purchased a push mower with my name on it, an imaginary ID tag if you will. Dad told me this push mower

was mine to use and I was responsible for the care of the machine. So began my early career of lawn maintenance. My father was a long distance truck driver for most of my life and his absence placed a tremendous amount of responsibility upon me at a very early age. I loved my parents and thought it an honor they would ask me to help in ways that only a young boy could help. I would mow yards and give the money that I earned to my mother.

One place in particular stands out in my memory as from the money that I earned, I felt as if I had struck gold. It was a vacant lot located off Highway 70 next to what used to be the Bryant's Grocery Store. The store owners, now deceased, Mr. and Mrs. Bryant were very nice. Soon after selling their family business, the new management asked me if I would be interested in mowing another piece of the property. They had been admiring my mower while I was enjoying a short break; the property needed some TLC to improve its appearance. It was a five-acre field but while I was mowing with my little push mower, it seemed it turned into a 20-acre field. Although it only took two hours for me to complete the mowing task, somehow it always took longer than expected. The problem was they would only allow me to mow the property every other week. Therefore, every two weeks I completed my task and the management then compensated me with \$10.00. I thought I was rich!

Personally, I do not believe anyone actually realizes what he or she is going to do in life, even when their life is carefully planned. Some people are ramroded or forced (for you that are not familiar with that term, ramrod is a practice used for a muzzle loading rifle) into jobs and other positions due to family pressure. Others, like myself, flounder in life until they hit a snag and decide to stay anchor a while. A number of these type people find

themselves in jobs and careers simply due to necessity and other economic reasons. I had great aspirations of attending college and possibly becoming a pilot, but that soon changed to a military career in the United States Coast Guard. It seemed like a good decision. All of my male cousins went into some branch of the military. I was drawn to the U.S. Coast Guard because of the water. Being from Carteret County located on the Atlantic seaboard, I'm sure you can understand my way of thinking. However, after all of the tests were successfully passed, the final physical exam of which I had no control would end my military career before it ever began.

At the time I had no idea of where I was to be stationed in life. I now firmly believe that God was intervening and prevented me from this military career. This episode in my life is one more affirmation of my belief in God's providential care of His children.

It was early 1972 and the United States was coming to the close of the ten year war in Vietnam. If accepted by the Coast Guard, I could have been stationed on the Mi Cong Delta riding around on a U.S. Coast Guard gun boat, strapped to a 20-millimeter deck-mounted machine gun; or I could have been stationed at the Fort Macon Coast Guard station with the rest of my classmates and cousins. At the age of 18, I was required to sign up for the country's military draft system. Two weeks after I had signed up for the draft, the U.S. Congress dissolved the draft. To this very day I praise God for being merciful to me. He did not allow me to make that military career move that could have been devastating to me. Others joined and went to Vietnam. Why was I spared? As I now reflect upon that time, I realize God had something else in store for me; the ministry in which He has placed me and this is the real adventure that I never dreamed of. We never know what God has planned for each of us when we arrive at the crossroads of our life. It is only by His divine intervention that we do not

foolishly and haphazardly ruin our lives, though some have despite God's hand upon them.

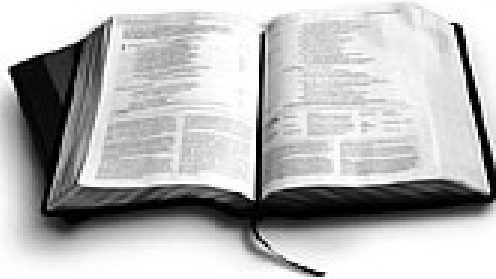
My family had moved to Forsyth County in 1969 and I returned home to them. I soon married and settled into a family life with my wife Sue. This decision to marry was not by default. I met Sue, my high school sweetheart, in 1970. We began to have long discussions about our future and she knew that I had to pursue the plans I made before I had met her. Following my graduation from East Forsyth High School in 1972, she patiently watched me make my way back to Morehead City to enlist. Sue had graduated a year before me and although we dated for three years while finishing high school, she was willing to wait just a little while longer for our marriage and for me to get my career on track. After all, it seemed the best decision for the both of us at the time.

Little do we realize that God has always known each of us and has planned our lives for us. However, with our old rebellious nature that is instilled in us, we don't really care about what God wants for us. We make our plans according to the flesh and try to maneuver God to the back of the room. We need to realize; God will not take the position at back of the room. He will step up in His time and make claim on His personal possession. It is then that we find everything we have planned flies right out of the window. I still cannot believe how foolish I was in believing that I could make my own life into whatever I wanted it to become. I was watching people in the world that had never asked the Lord to be their personal Savior go about their life and perform their every wish and whim without a hitch. Unsaved people can and have that capability to fulfill every desire in life, but not without consequences. Little do they know that God has a plan for them also. It is called salvation. I stand firm in my belief that Almighty God is a sovereign God and He dispenses providential care to His very own.

«²⁶*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* ²⁷*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* ²⁸*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* ²⁹*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* ³⁰*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* ³¹*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?»* Romans 8:26-31

In conclusion, I believe each one of us will achieve God's perfect will for our lives by attending to God's divine will. The Apostle Paul said it best when he stated in II Timothy 4:7, "***I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.***" With that statement, we know the Apostle Paul could clearly see in his rearview mirror the perfect will of God.

«¹⁰*The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.* ¹¹*The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.* ¹²*And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* ¹³*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.* ¹⁴*For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.»* Ecclesiastes 12:10-14 †



All Scripture references in this writing are taken from the
Authorized King James Version

Acts 26:18	II Timothy 4:10
Ecclesiastes 1:12-18	Isaiah 6:1-8
Ecclesiastes 12:10-14	Isaiah 14:13-14
Ephesians 3:1-21	James 1:8
Hebrews 10:23-25	James 4:1-10
Hebrews 12:5-13	John 3:16
Hebrews 13:7	Lamentations 3:21-26
I Corinthians 2:9-14	Matthew 6:19-34
I Corinthians 6:11	Numbers 22:6
I Corinthians 6:19-20	Numbers 22:21-34
I John 1:5-10	Philippians 2:12-13
I John 2:3-11	Philippians 3:13-14
I John 2:15-17	Proverbs 3:5-8
I John 5:16	Psalms 16:1-11
I Peter 1:13-25	Psalms 119:1-18
I Peter 2:2-3	Psalms 139:1-18
I Peter 2:9-10	Romans 8:26-31
II Corinthians 6:14-18	Titus 2:11-14

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