

THE STEPS OF THE  
APOSTLE PAUL

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Much of Bible interpretation boils down to common sense and a basic understanding that the Bible is a written document whose form of expression is no different from any other work of literature.

Today, perhaps more than in any other age, there are disorder of philosophies and sub-philosophies, bits and pieces of false religion that are taught, talked of, written about, and experimented with, while there is more knowledge now than at any other time. We ought to know better.

Every time I struggle, every time I fail, every time I hurt, those are thorn-pointed reminders that I must depend on the Lord.

Our weakness deepens with a dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel; the harder we lean, and the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually.

“And let us not think for one moment Satan does not like to keep company with Christians.”

“ Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession a good profession before many witnesses.”

This book was written for any person who desires to study the teaching of God's Word in an orderly manner. In this study book, the authors do not pretend to have brought out all gems of the Bible truths about Paul's thorns. It has been written for the sole purpose of revealing the Pagan teaching that have infiltrated the Christian Churches of today, and to encourage God's people to search the scriptures to see if what are being taught can be proven by God's Words. Our desire is that the truth will be brought out about Paul's problems and that it was from his own people.

This book is sent forth with prayer that the Heavenly Father will use it for His Eternal glory and a blessing to the people who is searching for truth.

I am of the firm and deepening conviction that there has never been a time in history of the Christian dispensation when there were more deceived people in the churches of our land than there are at this time. It's not as easy as many people suppose to find one who truly knows the Lord. Surely, they are not to be found in every Church, and most probably they are few in any Church. John Wesley said, "Many people have been inoculated with a mild dose of Christianity that makes them immune to the real thing." I believe this to be true in this generation.

Paul had many personal difficulties and setbacks, many reasons to turn his focus inward. Yet, he continued to pray for others regularly, joyfully, and all-inclusively.

Through  
our heaviest  
trials we can  
know that God  
is right there  
by our side.

Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually

Every time I struggle, every time I fail, every time I hurt, those are thorn-point reminders that I must depend on the Lord.

It is the very act of fixing our priority and devotion upon the Lord which Satan fights the hardest. Our real point of defeat is failure to develop inner discipline.

The message of salvation Paul  
carried to Europe 2,000 years ago  
can give us new hope for the  
future.

#### THORNS AND THE ENEMY.

In the book of Numbers and Joshua,  
thorns are used to describe an enemy.  
“Thorns in your side” and “thorns in your  
eyes” (Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13).

#### THE BURNING BUSH.

Then, there is the thorn bush on Sinai  
that burned, but was not consumed. It  
was prophetic of Israel who was to go  
through the fire without being consumed.

“This deceptive New Age philosophy,  
sugar-coated, is being spoon fed to us  
each and every day of our lives.  
The flavor makes it go down easily,  
but we are nonetheless being given  
larger and more deadly doses of a  
poison that will spiritually destroy  
us in time

We can deflect the temptations that  
the evil spirit world of Satan throws  
at us, but only with God’s saving help.

## The Thorn that Hindered Paul

Prayers are not always answered in the way that we desire them to be. The apostle Paul's was not! "For this thing I besought the Lord three times, that it might depart from me" (2 Cor.12:8). He prayed three different times that his "Thorn in the Flesh" be removed. It is certain that the attacks was accompanied by very severe pain and was recurrent over many years. Paul describes it as the works of angels of Satan or Satan himself. Paul's victory over these disorders is described in direct and moving words how he was able to come to terms with his humiliating affliction.

Paul's ability to overcome these attacks has given Christians assurance to the believing heart; that has brought comfort and encouragement to many troubled and afflicted believers down through the centuries. The Bible teaches us that each victory over trials and temptations produces growth, and over a long period of time growth produces maturity.

Christ Himself knew the discipline of unanswered prayers when He went to a place called Gethsemane and fell down to pray, that if it were possible for that hour of His crucifixion would pass. He to asked three different times if there was any other way this could be accomplished without going through the torment of physical and mental pain, but in obedience to His Father, He said "not my will, but thy will be done" (Mark 14:32-42). And He and the disciples came to an olive grove called the garden of Gethsemane, and He instructed His disciples, "Sit here, while I go and pray."

He took Peter, James, and John, with him and began to be filled with horror and deepest distress. And He said to them, “My soul is crushed by sorrow to the point of death; stay here and watch with me.”

He went on a little further and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the awful hour awaiting Him might never come. “Father, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for you. Take away this cup from me. Yet, I want your will, not mine to be done.”

Then He returned to the three disciples and found them asleep. “Simon!” He said, “sleepest thou?” “Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? Watch with me and pray lest the Tempter (Satan) overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak.”

And He went away again and prayed, repeating His pleading. Again, He returned to them and found them sleeping, for they were very tired. And they didn’t know what to say. The third time when He returned to them, He said, “Sleep on; get your rest! But no! The time for sleep has ended! Look! I am betrayed into the hands of the wicked men. Come! Get up! We must go! Look! My betrayer is here” (Mark 14:32-42)!

The answer to victory over trials and temptation comes from Christ’s example, and is complete. The answer is continuous and final, present as well as past. Grace, here and always in the New Testament indicates not only “favor” but power, exerting its fullest power when human incapacity is at its lowest, inferior and the weakest.

Many Bible scholars have said these disorders described as a ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ that Paul had, cannot be identified with any certainty. Many have said that Paul was losing his eyesight, because when Paul was carrying his crusade into Greece in about 50 A.D. he

had with him his traveling companion named Luke, which seems to have done most of the writing for Paul. He was an accurate and able historian, and has written some of the most powerful descriptive writing in the New Testament.

What was this ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ that Paul was so troubled with? The Moffett Commentary on Second Corinthians stated that “epilepsy” has been suggested. Other suggestions are “rheumatic or neurological affliction, malaria, or ophthalmic (inflammation of the eyes).”

The Abingdon Bible Commentary states that Paul’s ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ was most likely a “physical disorder, intermittent or chronic, which not only tried the Apostle’s endurance, but sometime reduced him to obvious helplessness.”

The Zondervan Bible commentary states, “the exact nature of Paul’s affliction can only be conjectured; attempts at identification that have varied widely. Whatever its precise nature, his feeling of weakness made him constantly dependent upon Divine empowerment.”

The Fausset’s Bible Dictionary on the nature of the ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ (2 Cor.12:7), “a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” Through the abundance of this revelation was probably some painful, tedious, bodily disorder, which shamed him before those to whom he ministered. Thorn implies bodily pain, (buffet) shame. Trials comes to us sometimes to show us that God is much larger than we are.”

Paul was born in the city of Tarsus, located at the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. Born of purest Jewish blood, a son of a Pharisee. Paul studied under a Pharisee, an eminent doctor of the Law at Jerusalem. Being a superior student, he absorbed not only the teaching of the Old Testament, but also he became a religious

leader among the Pharisees. He became a persecutor, armed with authority from the high priest to bring the Christians to justices.

Paul was about thirty years of age when he became a leader in Judaism. His active opposition to Christianity marked him as the natural leader of the persecution that brought the death of Stephen. He was convinced that Christians, followers of Christ, were heretics and set out to exterminate them.

Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of the Lord when a light from heaven shone around him and he was blinded. The Lord said unto him, "Go and do what I say. For you are my chosen instrument to take my message to the nations and before kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show you how much you must "suffer" because of me" (Acts 9:15-16).

Paul was in agony (mental distress) there for three days, blinded and without food until Ananias came and prayed for him and told him what the Lord Jesus Christ had commissioned him to do for the work among the Gentiles.

The study of Paul's life in the Bible is a story of a devout man who lived to serve the Lord. But tragedy hovers over this most righteous man. Why should Paul suffer? What was this "Thorn in the Flesh" that the messengers from Satan was to buffet and bother and prick at his pride? Three different times he begged God to heal him. Each time God said "No!" "But I am with you Paul, that is all you need." Since Paul knew it was all for Christ's good, he was quite happy about "The Thorns," and about insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties, for when Paul was weak then he was strong--the less he had, the more Paul depended on God (2 Cor.12:10).

The Bible teaches that Paul's troubles came from Satan. Like Job, a devout man, who lived thousands of years ago, was also buffeted by Satan, and had a 'Thorn in the Flesh.'

But tragedy hovered over this righteous man. When the book opens, we notice Job is about to lose everything--children, property, and wealth, his good name and even his health. Job's trouble began when God told Satan that there was no one upon this earth like Job, he was blameless and upright, a man who fears God (Job 1:8).

Job's 'Thorn in the Flesh' was none other than Satan; the same spiritual being which spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:1-6), tempted Christ, (Matthew 4:1-11), afflicted Paul, and who is the deceiver of the whole world (Rev.12:9). Job also prayed for this Thorn to be removed from him.

The book of Job teaches us that suffering may occur for reasons we don't understand, unless or until God reveals them to us. Trials and sufferings provide spiritual enrichment and build a relationship between God and his people.

While hopelessly despondent and protesting passionately against what he interprets as an unjust divine sentence upon him, it is still to God that Job turns and cries. And he repentantly commits himself anew to his Lord.

The Bible describes Job's life as perfect and ideal. He was wealthy, having seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, and five hundred teams of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and many servants. He had seven sons and three daughters who loved each other and for whom Job prayed for continually. He was a godly man, blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Job enjoyed his riches and his blessings for a great many years; but then the Lord sent him trouble to test his patience and to see if Job's love of the Lord would survive great misery.

It all started when there was a meeting in heaven, God and His angels were there and Satan came among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, "hast thou set thy heart on Job?" Satan replied, take away this hedge of protection from him and he will curse you for what has happened." Job lost everything, his sons and daughters, all of his animals, and all his servants. Then Job realized that in this short space of time he had lost all his great wealth. With all of this bad news, Job was filled with grief for his children, his servants and wealth, but he bowed down to the earth and worshiped the Lord.

Satan was not finished with Job, he was angry because he still loved his maker. "I had nothing of my own when I was born into this world, and I shall have nothing of my own when I die and leave it," said Job.

Satan had a further test for Job's faithfulness to God. Job began to suffer from sickness and pain. He was covered from head to foot with painful boils, and he was seated on the ground suffering severe pain when his wife came and demanded angrily, stop praising God as you do. Look at the trouble he has brought upon you. "Curse God and die!"

Because of the faithfulness of Job, the Lord took away Job's pain and illness. The Lord blesses Job even more fully than before he had suffered, and made Job even richer than ever, even before his sorrows.

Sometimes suffering is used to educate man or to lead him to maturity. Through suffering man learns things he would not otherwise have learned. Job, for example, gained new insights into life after death and God's greatness.

God teaches man that suffering should not produce rebellion but an increased faith. Just as man cannot understand the entire complex working of nature and must trust God to operate the universe, so Job must trust God in his personal life, even though he could not understand everything that was happening. We, like Job, must put our trust in God.

In second Corinthians chapter 12, it seems that Paul had trouble with an evil spirit like Job. Paul said he knew a man that was taken up into the third heaven, but he did not know if it was in the body or out of the body. That man was Paul himself. It happened about fourteen years ago when Paul and Barnabas was at Lystra. Some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and turned the crowd into a murderous mob, and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, apparently dead. Paul was not translated up to God's throne. Paul had a vision, or he saw it in a special dream, that which the Lord has shown him a new revelation, and things that is about to come upon the earth (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Cor.12:1-4).

Because Adam and Eve followed the voice of the serpent (Satan) rather than God, they gave back the authority and dominion over the Earth to Satan, who is the God of this world (John 14:30), authority over the kingdom on earth (Luke 4:5-7). Satan is termed "prince of power of the air" (Eph.2:2), because the air is supposed to be a region in which malicious spirits dwell, all of them of whom are under the direction and influence of Satan. Instead of the perpetual joy and everlasting life they might have had, God afflicted both Adam and Eve with sorrow.

Adam was placed in the garden, and God told him he might eat freely of all the fruits that grew there so abundantly. There was one exception. In the garden was a single tree from which Adam might not eat of that fruit.

For a short time Adam and Eve were obedient and happy. Adam worked in the garden and Eve helped him, and they enjoyed the sweet fruits for food.

Among the living things in the garden was a serpent, or snake, which we are told in the Bible, “was more subtle (clever) than any beast of the field,” and the serpent was able to speak. This serpent was really an evil spirit called Satan, who is often called a serpent. So Eve allowed the serpent to persuade her, and she tasted the fruit; and Adam, who saw what she had done, forgot the command he had received and the punishment he had been told would follow disobedience, and he also ate of the forbidden fruit.

Adam and Eve were both punished for their disobedience. They were told that sorrow and pain would be there all the days of their lives; and they must live by hard work; that they would die, and would return to the dust from which they had come. Also God doomed them and their descendants to death, which they had never known before. Because of their disobedience, now Satan again became the God of this world. Thus Adam lost for himself, and for the human souls that would come after him, perfection, eternal life, and the paradise of Eden.

Satan was behind all the tragedies that happened to Adam, Job, and to Paul. Paul called it a ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ for his entire problems. Satan is still behind the sorrows of today. Be careful--watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry lion, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he

attacks. Trust the Lord; and remember that other Christians all around the world is going through these sufferings to (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Israel had been destroyed and ruined in a bloody war with the Assyrians; documented in the Old Testament. The nation of Judah also was destroyed in the battle with the Chaldeans. The prophet Ezekiel declares positive words of hope with the people in exile. He speaks of the Promised Land and the Holy City Jerusalem, being restored. After this, the divided kingdom of Judah and Israel would be reunited under God's divine protection. Ezekiel then shared an incredible vision of a brand new temple, a new sanctuary that the glory of God would live and dwell in among His people. After 70 years of captivity, the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple, then their adversary endeavored to stop the work (Ezra chapter 5). "Satan standing at Joshua's right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1). Joshua, the high priest, may here represent the whole Jewish people, and Satan; the grand accuser of the brethren was there. The angel of the Lord was there to deliver Israel, but old Satan was there to resist them in building the temple (Zechariah 3:2-5).

After four years the building of the temple was completed and was dedicated in 516 B.C. with great rejoicing. This was a marvelous accomplishment that would have a stabilizing effect on the lives of the people.

When Israel started their journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan, The Lord spoke to Moses and told him to speak to the children of Israel that they shall drive out all of the inhabitants of the land and "destroy every thing; pictures, images, and all of their high places: "but if they would not drive out all of the inhabitants, they would become a prick in your eyes, and Thorns in your Side (flesh), and shall vex you in the land wherein ye

dwelling” (Numbers 33:50-55). The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, “if you don’t it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them. The promise of conquest depends on your obedience.”

Joshua called for all of Israel, and for their elders; and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them: “I am old and stricken in age: and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is He that hath fought for you.”

“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God; else if ye do in anywise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriage with them, and go unto them, and they to you, know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be Snares and Traps unto you, and Scourges in your Sides, and Thorns in your Eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you (Joshua 23:13).”

Paul avoided words that would have implied bodily sickness or inflammation of the eyes, but there is strong evidence here that Paul referred to the bitter and relentless enemies of the Gospel, who is doing the works of Satan. This is a perfect description of the hardened secular Israelites who engaged in every device that demons could suggest in their godless and persistent opposition to Paul throughout every moment of his apostleship.

Paul had to leave the Thessalonians church because of the persecution raised by the Jews, but wished to return there as soon as possible. In his absence he sent Timothy and

Silas to them. Paul was anxious to return, he tried again and again, but Satan was there to hinder him (1 Thes.2:14-18).

Paul thus characterized that his Thorn was the Israelites who engaged in every device they could suggest in their godless and persistent opposition to Paul throughout every moment of his journey. Paul became more and more fervent in his preaching, and the Damascus Jews couldn't withstand his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. After awhile the Jewish leaders were determined to kill him. But Paul was told about their plans, that they were watching the gates of the city day and night preparing to murder him. So, during the night some of his friends let him down in a basket through an opening in the city wall (Acts 9:22-25). "And when Saul (Paul) was coming to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and that he spoke to Him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

Paul and Barnabas went to Antioch on the Sabbath day and into the synagogue and began to preach about this man Jesus, "how everyone who trusted in Him is freed from all guilt and declared righteous," something the Jewish law could not do. But when the Jewish leaders saw the crowd, they were jealous, and cursed and argued against whatever Paul has said.

Then the Jewish leaders stirred up both the Godly women and civic leaders of the city and incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas, running them out of town (Acts 13:50-51). From Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium, and stood up to preach in the synagogue with such power that both Jews and Gentiles believed.

When Paul and Barnabas learned of a plot to incite a mob of Gentiles, Jews, and Jewish leaders to attack and stone them, they fled for their lives, going to the cities of Lyconia, Lystra, Derby, and the surrounding area, preaching the good news there (Acts 14:1-7).

Paul came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. Paul preached there three Sabbaths in a row, and many believed. But the Jewish leaders were jealous and incited some worthless associates from the streets to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, planning to take Paul and Silas, but they had already gone. They dragged Jason out with some of the other believers, but later they let them go (Acts 17:1-9).

A mob was quickly formed in Philippi proclaiming, “these Jews are corrupting our city. They are teaching the people to do things that are against the Roman laws,” and they dragged them before the Judge who ordered them stripped and beaten, and thrown into prison. The jailer in Philippi came in contact with the Apostle when Paul was thrown into the town’s prison. Paul and Silas had been beaten, bound and thrown into Jail, but at midnight a great earthquake occurred. The prison doors opened. The prisoner’s chains also came loose. The jailer guard came in and found all the prisoners there. He asked, “What must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and your entire household” (Acts 16:20-32).

When Paul and Barnabas was at Lystra, they healed a man who was crippled from birth, and had never walked. He was listening as Paul preached, and Paul noticed him and realized he had faith to be healed. So Paul called to him, “Stand up!” And the man leaped to his feet and started walking!

When the listening crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted, “These men are gods in human bodies!” Paul ran among the people shouting, “we are merely men bringing you the good news about the living God.” A few days later some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and turned the crowd into a murderous mob and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, apparently dead (Acts 14:8-19).

Fourteen years after this stoning, Paul wrote about his experience of being stoned and left for dead. The translation into paradise (heaven) was in a vision and Paul had received this revelation from the Lord. “I heard things so astounding that they are beyond a man’s power to describe or to put in words” (2 Cor.12:1-4).

God chose someone well suited for the task of proclaiming the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Paul, a man who said that, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels (Satan), nor principalities, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

I (Paul) will say this: because these experiences I had were so tremendous, God has given me strength to endure the messengers from Satan that has been a “Thorn in my Flesh” to hurt and bother me, and prick my pride. Since I know it is all for Christ’s good, I am quite happy about “the thorn” and about all the hardships that has befallen me.

There are many more examples and much evidence to show that the ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ was from Satan, using the very people at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and in other cities that Paul was proclaiming the message of salvation.

Paul had warned the Corinthian church that false Christ’s and false prophets would come there after he had left Corinth.

”I must go, but I am frightened, fearing that after my departure, that in some way you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to our Lord. Don’t be like Eve, as Satan in the Garden of Eden deceived her. You seem so gullible: you believe whatsoever anyone tells you, even if he is preaching about another Jesus than the one we preach, or a different spirit you received, or shows you a different way to be saved.”

God never sent those men at all, they are “phonies” who have fooled you into thinking they are Christ’s apostles. Yet I am not surprised! Satan can change himself into an angel of light, so it is no wonder his servants can do it too, and seem like godly ministers.

Paul was telling the Corinthian church that God never sent those men at all. That they were “False Prophets” who have fooled them into thinking they are Christ’s Apostles (one of many thorns). “Whatsoever they can boast about, I can boast about too.”

“They brag that they are Hebrews, do they? Well, so am I. And they say that they are Israelites, God’s chosen people? So am I. And they are descendants of Abraham? Well, I am too. They say they serve Christ? But I serve Him (Christ) far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail often, been whipped many times without numbers, and faced death again and again and again; five different times the Jews gave me their terrible thirty-nine lashes.”

“Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I was in the open sea all night and the next day. I have traveled many weary miles and have been often in great danger from flooded rivers, and from robbers, and from my own people; the Jews, as well as from the hands of the Gentiles.”

That is not all, “I have faced grave dangers from mobs in the cities and from death in the deserts and in the stormy sea, and from men who claim to be brothers in Christ but

are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often, I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food; often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. But if I must brag, I would rather brag about the things that show how weak I am” (2 Corinthians 11:21-28). Then beside all of this, I have the constant worry of how the Churches are getting along. Who makes a mistake and I do not feel his sadness? Who falls without my longing to help him? Who is spiritually hurt without my fury rising against the one who hurt him?”

To understand Jesus, Paul, and the other Hebrew writers, we must understand their culture, customs and ways of the Israelite people, where they lived and how they lived.

Like a shepherd employed in tending, feeding and guarding the sheep, He led his sheep, and knew them all by name, and they knew his voice. He saw that they were all safe in the fold at night. Jesus stated, “I am the Good Shepherd and know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep to, in another fold. I must bring them in also, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock with one shepherd.” Remember the good shepherd Christ. He not only fed His flock, but also died for His sheep.

Here is another illustration, “The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer sowing good seed in his field; but one night as he slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the crop began to grow, the weeds grew too.”

“The farmer’s men came and told him, Sir, the field where you planted the choice seed is full of weeds! An enemy has done it. He exclaimed: Shall we pull up the weeds? They asked. No, he replied. You’ll hurt the wheat if you do. Let both grow together

until the harvest, and I will tell the reapers to sort out the weeds and burn them, and put the wheat in the barn.” Here, the wheat is the Christians and the weeds are the non-Christians.

Throughout the land of Israel the men would build a hedge (fence) of thorny bushes to surround their vineyards or trees to keep out the wild beasts, and also for their own protection, just as all Israel was fenced in (protected) by God. The Jewish people, and the city of Jerusalem, were hedged with Divine protection (Psa.80:12, Matt.21:33). It seems that every place Paul traveled the messengers of Satan hedged him in. When he would try to break through the hedge, that old serpent (Satan) would try to stop him (Eccl.10:8). It seemed to him every place he went he was fenced (Hedged) in with bushes of thorns (surroundings). The false prophets had put a Hedge (thorns) around Paul’s teaching to prevent the people from repenting. These false prophets who sought to force their own belief upon the people opposed God’s true servants.

They used flattering promises and predictions like they did in Ezekiel’s days. “Ye have not gone up into the gaps (breaches), neither made up the hedge (fixed the hedge) for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord” (Ezekiel 13:5).

It was the same with the illustrations that Jesus gave to the people at that time. “A man planted a vineyard and built a wall around it and dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a watchman’s tower. Then he leased the farm to a tenant farmer and moved to another country. At grape-picking time he sent one of his men to collect his share of the crop. But the farmer beat up the man and sent him back empty-handed.”

“The owner then sent another of his men, who received the same treatment, only worse, for his head was seriously injured. The next man he sent was killed, and later

others were either beaten or killed, until there was only one left--his only son. He finally sent him, thinking they would surely give him their full respect.”

“What do you suppose the owner will do when he hears what happened? He will come and kill them all, and lease the vineyard to others” (Mark 12:1-9). This was the story of God the Father sending His only Son Jesus Christ to His people of Israel to be rejected and killed.

The Lord commissioned Paul to go into the highways, byways and into hedges to compel them to come to repentance (Luke 14:23). When Paul would enter a city to preach the gospel there was that “Thorn in the Flesh,” the messenger of Satan, to buffet him (2 Cor.12:7). These were “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor.11:13). The Church at the present time is sick and in a state of slumber and sleep (Matt. 25:5). The churches are satisfied with their religious appetite that threaten their chance of eternal life. In the days of its founding it was blessed with ministers of God.

Could the expression “Thorn in the Flesh” refer to the Jews, False Apostles, deceitful workers that seemed to have followed Paul? Jesus Christ sent Paul to proclaim His truth. Satan, the adversary of God’s truth, sent men to preach and teach lies and calamities, severely buffeting Paul. But Paul declared, “I am quite happy about the “Thorn” and about insults and hardship, persecution and difficulties; for when I am weak, then I am strong-less I have, the more I depend on Him” (2:Cor.12:10).

“There is rather uniform agreement that most of the reference to “Thistles” and “Thorns” in both the Old and New Testament are generic in character. Rhamnus Palestine Boisiss, and Palestine Buckthorn, are the two “Thorny” shrubs most widespread

and well known in Biblical times in Palestine. Both were used for planting Hedges; a straggling shrub that grows from three to nine feet in height. Its pliable branches with their uneven stiff thorns lent themselves to the plating of the “Crown” made by the soldiers for the purpose of mocking Jesus, the King of the Jews (Zondervan Bible Dictionary). “They platted a Crown of Thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand, and mocked Him” (Matt.27:29).

Apparently the Crown of Thorns that the soldiers put on the head of Jesus was to make fun of Him, but also it could be well believed that the Crown of Thorns was Divinely inspired to foretell future events. Paul tells us that every one who strives for eternal life will be tempted in all things (1 Cor.9:25). “But he that endures unto the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the “crown” of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that Love Him” (James 1:12).

When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:4). When that “Crown” of Thorns pricked the flesh of Jesus, it was the prophetic sign that would follow the Christians throughout all generations. Paul went to his death with the “Thorn in the Flesh” as did the other disciples who were persecuted and gladly accepted death rather than denounce the Saviour. Only John was exiled on the isle of Patmos and died a natural death.

James was beheaded at Jerusalem in A.D. 44. Matthew the evangelist pinned to the ground and beheaded in Ethiopia in A.D. 60. Andrew crucified at Achaia in A.D. 70. Thomas, tortured by the natives in Calamina, a city in India, thrown into an oven, and struck through with spears in A.D. 70. Luke, the evangelist, was hung from an olive tree

in Greece in A.D. 93. Paul was beheaded in Rome in 67 A.D. Peter was crucified in Rome in 80 A.D. Then there was Stephen who was stoned to death by the Sanhedrin outside of Jerusalem in A.D. 64 while Paul looks on. “A greater persecution of Christian Martyrs began in the time of Nero” (Fox’s book of Martyrs).

Under the altar John saw the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (Rev.6:9). These are the ones that endured Satan’s attack that brought on persecution and hardships. Old Satan and his demons causes trouble on every side, “Yet we are not destroyed” (2 Cor.4:6-9). The gospel that Paul preached is an open invitation to all “believers” that the evidence is sufficient, and that it is a moral question whether one will accept the Grace of God. Those who disbelieve Paul’s Gospel deserve condemnation in the sight of God.

We pray that this study has brought new light on how Satan buffets (striking a deadly blow) on God’s children. Its purpose is to direct our attention and activity on growing in the Christians life. This growth can only take place when we are willing to face up to the problems in our lives and realize that we must accept the responsibility for them. Victory will come only by yielding our lives to God, and by refusing to allow sin to reign in our lives. Jesus knows our hearts, and that is what really counts. We must confess our sins and be washed in the blood of the lamb.

Beware of false religious preaching; teachers who fail to tell you clearly all that the Bible says about being saved.

Demons are behind the false teaching today that is so prevalent in religious groups, as it was in Paul’s days. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul attributes false doctrine to teachers who are “False Apostles” and ministers of Satan. The ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ is still

prevalent when we promote sound doctrine and unity in the Church with false doctrine and strife. Let us be on guard! Take the weapons of truth, faith, righteousness, God's word, and use them against the devil and his forces.

One must understand the parable in their relationship to Christ's teaching and God's kingdom. One must not overlook the cultural background in which our Lord lived and worked. The Parable of the seed is a good example of Paul's life. Jesus explains this parable as "The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer sowing good seed in the field, some seed fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up they were scorched; and because they had no roots, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but others fell into good ground and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold" (Matthew 13:4-8).

Jesus answered His own parable by telling us what happens to the seeds and why some did not take root and grow. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understand it not, then cometh the wicked one, and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which, received seed by the "way side." As for him who is sown "on stony soil," that is the man who hears the word and accepts it at once with enthusiasm; he has no root in himself, he does not last, and when the word brings trouble or persecution he is at once repelled. As for him who is sown "among thorns," that is the man who listens to the word, but the worry of the world and the delight of being rich choke the word; so it proves unfruitful. As for him who is sown "on good soil," that is

the man who hears the word and understands it; he bears fruit, producing now a hundred fold, now sixty fold, and now thirty fold” (Matthew 13:19-23).

This parable was fulfilled, starting with Paul when he brought this message to the Jews throughout his journey, but especially to those who believed. It is to Satan’s interest to introduce hypocrites and wicked persons into religious societies in order to discredit the works of God. It is the very act of fixing our priority and devotion upon the Lord that Satan fights the hardest. Our real point of defeat is the failure to develop inner discipline. Let us not think for one moment that Satan does not like to keep company with Christians.

Warning! One cannot understand the spirit world without understanding the role of Satan the devil, ruler of the power of darkness and leader of the force of the evil spirits. Satan has the perfect disguise to perform his role of the Adversary of God and the enemy of all mankind.

Satan has deceived most professing Christians in the Churches to believe a lie. It is well to remember that even in the days of the Apostles, their pens and voices often cried out against the errors that were coming into the Churches, and Paul, especially, had to meet these things (Acts 20:29-30). The Churches lost its simplicity, and gradually but surely, Pagan Festivals took over the place of Christian institutions. From the representation given in the Bible, it would seem that they were simply deluded, “blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14).

Imitators have always plagued true religion. Alongside the faithful and true prophets of the Lord, there were other men who had not received a Revelation from God. Jeremiah refused to have anything to do with these men (Jeremiah 23:21-36). There were

those who claimed to have received messages from God, but as a matter of fact, those men did not receive such a message from God, but rather from Satan.

Jesus and His Apostles repeatedly warn of the many False Prophets, or preachers that would come in these last days and deceive many. Eternity is at stake, we must not follow those False Ministers, or we would be lost. Modern evangelicals present a watered down partial gospel that is more deceptive and dangerous than no gospel at all. They falsely tell people that all they need to do to be saved is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

The Bible alone must be our guide in all things. The perils of our times include the great mass of False Teachers that we are warned against. Let Jesus speak on this subject, “And many (not a few) but Many False Prophets (preachers) shall arise and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11-13). Paul made this statement, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived“ (2 Tim.3:13). Also, Paul said, “For the time will come when they (the people) will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall heap to themselves teachers (False Preachers) having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth (God’s Word), and be turned into untruthfulness” (2 Tim.4:2-4). “That if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt.7:22; 24:24).

Instead of being a living flame of fire stomping and exhorting against the evil that surrounds us, the Church has become Apathetic. When the whole world is rapidly verging toward catastrophe, she is silent. She continues to hold formal services, and admits to Holy Communion to those who through their worldly lives, “Crucifying Christ

afresh and bringing Him to open shame.” Without doubt, the Church’s first need is a thorough change of heart. Oh! That the Church might repent.

Every Christian is continually faced with the ultimate challenge. Do we attempt to serve God by compromising and seek to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16)? The choice is ours every day, and remember, “All who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted.” But take great joy in knowing that you are not alone!

As conditions continue to worsen, it becomes more urgent for God’s people to examine themselves and know for sure that they know Him, not just know about Him. There is no saving value in knowing about Him--one must Know Him, and have a personal relationship with Him and His words. To learn about Him we must study His Bible and embrace the words therein, the sayings, and commands of the Lord Jesus Christ by obeying them. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

For us to stand by tradition is often fatal. It was this that made it impossible for more than a comparatively small inner fellowship to break away from Jewish tradition and establish the Christian Era in the time of Paul’s preaching. We must read the Bible for ourselves to find out what God says about the way of salvation and eternal life. Trust in God, not a religion or Church, or man, to be saved. Today, the world is once again waiting for the Church to strike a new note--the note as a literal discipleship.

Many denominations and Churches are becoming broader in their views of sin and their duty towards God. Strict adherence to “The letter of the Law” (Ten Commandments) is now old-fashioned and out of date. Changing conditions and various

emergencies seem to justify the Church of our day in changing, and even setting aside many of the more strict laws of God's Book; thus by removing the unpleasantness from our religion, we can make an irresistible appeal to all the world: such is the reason of "Modernized Christianity." The Apostle Paul says that in the last days demons are going to become so seducing that people will not realize they are witnessing demonic activity; these are not Holy men of God.

Preachers and rulers of Churches today need not "fast oft," for most of them are on a Fine Fat Salary; neither do they need to be in "The Cold," like Paul and his helpers were, for now the Church has Parsonages, Vacations, and some are even supplied with Automobiles, Expense Accounts, Airplanes, Chauffeurs, and even Hairdressers to journey with them. It's a "New-Day" for the man of the Church-so he thinks.

They live as kings and queens with expensive homes in different states, and many have their own expensive airplanes and automobiles which they love to flaunt before their clientele. And all of this show is carried on in the name of Jesus, as if He has put His stamp of approval upon their lavish lifestyles. It would be well to compare them with the life and living standard of Jesus and the Apostles.

There is no difficulty to find accomplices among men who will publish this extremely wicked Teaching. Religion can be a very lucrative vocation if the teachings do not disturb a person's self-satisfying way of life. In the second letter to the Corinthians, such Teachings are described as "False Apostles, Deceitful workers, Transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ." "And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of light." Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also

are transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

The Apostle and Prophets of the Bible certainly were not far wrong concerning the way of life. It would be well for us to pattern our lives after these “Holy Men of God.” Paul said these men were considered “the off scourging of the earth.” Jesus said, “Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name Sake.” It is most evident by this that true Christians will not be popular.

Has the world changed its attitude towards the “Faith once delivered unto the saints?” This faith once heard--is it not accepted because we are more civilized, more reasonable to deal with? No--the word has not changed. But the message has. So also have the messengers.

Paul thus characterized that his ‘thorn in the flesh’ was the Israelites who engaged in every device they could suggest in their godless and persistent opposition to Paul throughout every moment of his journey. The true messengers of God still have the same problem as Paul had with False Preachers today who engage in every device that demons could suggest in their godless and persistent opposition to the true teaching of God’s words.

This deceptive New Age philosophy, sugar--coated, is being spoon--fed to us each day of our lives. The flavor makes it go down easily, but we are nonetheless being given larger and more deadly doses of a poison that will spiritually destroy us in time.

Today’s generation of “so called” Christians typically live for themselves instead of for Christ. They do not know the crucified, sanctified life of Christ. They are carnal sons of the world, not sons of God and His glorious kingdom. Clearly, we need to restore words

and concepts like virtue, goodness, good character, purity, decency and civility in our everyday vocabulary.

These false Christians are on their way to destruction, having no part in Christ and His Eternal Kingdom, which is only for His truly born again and faithful followers. Beware of false religious preachers, teachers, and churches of men who fail to tell you clearly all that the Bible says about being saved.

Read the Bible for your self to find out what God says about the way of salvation and eternal life. Trust in Jesus, not a religion of a church of man, to be saved. Turn from living for self and the world to live for Christ and His life, death and resurrection and be baptized. Prove your love for Jesus by keeping His Commandments (John 14:15).

“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of briers shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the lord for a name, for an everlasting sign (that) shall not be cut off” (Isa.55:13). Instead of the wicked shall arise the just; and instead of sinners, will arise the righteous, and become fruitful in piety and righteousness.

“Thorns (and) snares (are) in the way of the forward; he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them” (Prov.22:5). Various difficulties, trials, and suffering for the disobedient.

“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths” (Hosea 2:6). “I will put it out of your power to escape the judgments that I have threatened you with.”

“ The way of the slothful man is as an: hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is as a causeway” (Prov.15:19). Because he is slothful, he imagines ten thousand difficulties in the way which cannot be surmounted; but they are all the creatures of his own imagination, and that imagination is formed by his sloth.

“Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together” (Isa.27:4). The vineyard wishes for a wall and fence of thorns-human strength and protection from others for assistance, and trusting only in the power of Jehovah. We can see here that thorns and briers are in the path to keep us from taking the straight and narrow way, keeping us from progressing, and only God is able to get through them by burning them. “And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and His Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour His thorns and briers in one day” (Isa.10:17). The briers and thorns, these are the unforgiven ones. The fire of God’s wrath shall destroy them both great and small; it shall consume them. But the few that escape shall be looked upon as having escaped from the most imminent danger, “as a firebrand plucked out of the fire” (Amos 4:11).

Jesus not only took our sins on Himself when He was nailed to the cross, but he also took the thorns that prevents us from following the broad way that leads us to destruction. It is He that has lit the flame that has destroyed the thorny path, that we might find our way to eternal life.

Because the Angel of the Lord warned Israel to make no league with the Amorites, and because they did, the Angel warned, “wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from you; but they shall be (as thorns) in your sides and their gods shall be a snare unto you” (Judges 2:3). Their transgressions, and breach of the covenant, were the reasons why they were not given an entire possession of the Promised Land.

We know now, that one of the many wonderful things that Jesus did for us was that He took the thorns. He is replacing them with the fir tree, and the myrtle tree. “Instead of the thorn bush shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle

tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign (that) shall not be cut off” (Isa.55:13).

When this great battle comes at the end of this age called Armageddon, God will protect those who are saved, and a Hedge will surround those who are alive that no harm will come by them. “For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psa.91:1-11).

God’s will is that none of His creatures should perish but that all of them would be saved (1 Tim.2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). The law of love further expresses God’s nature and purpose; the law of love is the Ten Commandments, which Jesus summarized as loving God and neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). God is good, and His will is always best. He created us subject to moral laws but gave us freedom to obey or disobey. Having a will apart from God’s, we can choose God’s will (righteousness), or our own will (sin). Free will means we have the opportunity for a true relationship with God. God’s will is to change us, only our will stands in the way.

Lets consider Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus, before he was saved, was one of the most zealously religious men the world has ever known. He was a sincere, dedicated, aggressive and vivacious young man, who ever served the God of his father in all good conscience before he was converted and saved. He persecuted the Christians and drove them into strange cities. He made havoc of the Church of God and tried to exterminate it. He had Christians killed, imprisoned and put in chains. The reason he did these things is because he thought he was carrying out God’s will. He was fatally mistaken and deceived. Yes, he was religious, but lost. He was unaware of his real condition until

Christ revealed Himself to him on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-16). He did not know that he was lost and on his way to destruction until Christ interposed His saving Grace.

If ever anyone prized and valued the person and work of Christ, it was Apostle Paul. The testimony was that he counted all things but dung (garbage) for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He said, "For to me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying--well, that is better yet" (Phil.1:21). Why was Christ so precious to Paul? I believe it was because of the Ten Commandments (1 John 3:4) in the hands of the Spirit, that had slain his carnal hopes and stripped him of his self--righteous rags. Here is his testimony: "I had not know sin, but by the law (Ten Commandments), for without the law sin was dead, I was alive without the law once; but when the Commandments came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom.7:7-9). When God applied the law to him, he became deeply sensitive to sin and His condemnation by the law. The Ten Commandments came with power and conviction to his conscience, because it brings back sin and death to the flesh.

From Scripture we learn that only God's children will be allowed to enter into His kingdom. While anyone can become God's child, many will choose to remain separated from God and will not be allowed to enter in on that day (Matthew 7:21-23).

They will face God's justice for their tenacious rebellion and they will be destroyed. To ensure that the new kingdom is perfect, no evil in any form will enter therein. Only perfect people will live forever in God's perfect kingdom (Colossians 1:27-28).

Jesus bought us with His blood. When we accept Jesus' ownership as our Lord and Saviour, we become perfect before God, born again as His children, and fit for His perfect kingdom. This is God's perfect plan of salvation. Will you let that thorn (Satan), hinder you from eternal life?

The oppressors of God's word are still active in today's world, distorting the truth by their false teaching, which is obstructing the true ministers that are bringing the salvation message that brings eternal life. So we can see that Satan and his Demons (The Thorns) are still active in today's society.

The New Testament says the Devil exerts an evil influence on human society, but Jesus Christ came to destroy the Devil's power through His Life, Death and Resurrection. The New Testament especially depicts him as the unseen instigator of evil, the archenemy of God and man. The Chief Demonic Power bears a variety of names; as Satan (Matt.4:10), the Devil (Heb.2:14), the adversary (1 Tim.5:14), the Accuser of the Brethren (Rev.12:10), that Old Serpent the Devil (Rev.20:2), the Great Dragon (Rev.12:9), frequently Beelzebub (Matt.10:25), and once Belial (2 Cor.6:15). He is generally characterized as the "Evil One" and "Tempter" who opposes Jesus and seeks to draw disciples as well as to be their Savior into sin. Jesus nowhere concretely defines the function of the Devil among the few positive statements he makes about the Devil or that, "he was a Murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth" and that "he is a Liar" (John 8:44).

From the Bible we know there are other powerful beings in heaven known as Angels. Most of them are friendly and kind and helpful. They often appear in the Bible recorded as acting agents or messengers for God or serving and protecting human beings. Although, occasionally Angels do manifest themselves in something resembling a man in human form, they are not bound by physical limitation. They are Created, Eternal beings in the Spirit world.

Unfortunately, not all that is in the Spirit World is good, beneficial and helpful. There is a dark side. You cannot understand the Spirit World without understanding the role of Satan, the Devil, and ruler of the power of darkness, leader of the forces of spiritual evil.

The Bible reveals that Satan was once a powerful Angel called “Lucifer” the light bringer. He became perverted, wrapped up in his own power and beauty. In an outburst of envy and jealousy, he led one third of all the Angels in rebellion against the authority of God. The rebellion was repulsed, and Lucifer became Satan (the Adversary), and his Angelic Cohorts became Demons that are still with us today (Rev. 12:7-9).

Satan remains to this day in opposition to everything God stands for. He knows what God’s plan is, and is intent on subverting and frustrating it. Satan and his Demons would like to be our Spiritual Guide. They know that few of us would choose them voluntarily, but we can be Deceived when we are Tempted by Curiosity or Ignorance to seek the Spiritual in the wrong way. His first “Device” was to persuade Adam and Eve into disobeying God. From that day to this, he (Satan) has not ceased to look for opportunities to deceive and confuse their descendants.

God’s first beings of the Universe was made up of Holy Angels, of whom one of them was of the highest order, a Cherubim, Lucifer, being the highest of all, who was “the Anointed Cherub that coverth,” Who was created beautiful and perfect in his ways (Eze.28:12-18). Only God and Jesus Christ were above him in authority. This Cherub knew that he was beautiful, and pride entered his heart causing the first sin in the whole history of eternity to occur.

There was war in heaven when Lucifer, now known as Satan, in an outburst of envy and jealousy led one third of the Angels in a rebellion against the authority of God. Satan remains to this day in opposition to everything God stands for.

As Love, Truth, and Holiness characterize God, so Malice, Hatred, Murder, Lying, and Uncleaness characterize Satan. The Devil can still adversely influence Christians if they are not Spiritually watchful. His power and sway over humanity in general will not be taken away until Christ returns at the end of the age. The Bible says the Devil and his Demons still exercise power over the nations. God also says that every--good, and decent respected people--every one, is influenced by the Devil's Spirit Power.

The Judgment and Punishment is about to fall on the people for rejecting Christ, along with the Ruler or Prince of this world (John 16:11), who is understood to be Satan. Who has blinded the eyes and hardened the heart of the unbelievers (2 Cor.4:4), who have not believed on the Son of God. Satan, who usurped power over the world, was now to be greatly restrained, and by and by totally destroyed and cast into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41).

Among the Devil's characterizations are: "The god of this world," "The Prince of Power of the air" (Eph.2:2), and "The Devil with his Angels" (Matt.25:41). This points to Satan's immense power over the universe. In Ephesians 6:12 it is stated that our wrestling is "Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities-power-the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Paul tells us that, our enemy is a Murderer and a Liar (John 8:44). His principal method of attack is that of temptation (Matt.4:3), and his leading temptation can be grouped under "The Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life" (1 John 2:16).

He is called “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” (Destroyer) in Revelation 9:11, “Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils” (Matthew 12:24), and “The accuser of the Brethren” (Revelation 12:10), where he is also characterized as “The Great Dragon,” “The Old Serpent” and “The Deceiver of the whole World” (Rev.12:7-9).

Throughout the length and breadth of our nation, Satan has been going forth as a Roaring Lion seeking to devour whom he may (1 Peter 5:8). Satan remains to this day in opposition to everything God stands for. He knows what God’s plan is, and is intent on overthrowing and defeating it. Jesus instructed us to pray to God to “Deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). God knows that Satan holds a special hatred toward Christ and the Human Race; made in God’s image, and is committed to its destruction.

From Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Moses down to Jesus Christ, and to the suffering of Paul, all are by the hands of Satan. He will not quit until he has each one of us. Satan is out to destroy every thing and every human being upon the face of this earth. This evil world-system that he has organized upon his own principles (2 Cor.4:3-4), which “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19) indicates that the world is in the grip of and is passively yielded to the power of the devil. This power over men he holds by virtue without right.

Let us recapitulate thus far: The Earth was a Perfect Creation. The Angels shouted for joy. From creation, Angels populated it. There was a Throne on earth, on which sat the one whom we now call Lucifer, a Super Archangel, a Cherub. He had thorough experience in the administration of the government of God. He became envious of God’s power; resented authority over him. Satan plotted with his Angels to make War with God (Rev.12:7-9), to remove God from the throne of the universe. So Lucifer was no longer

“Light-Bringer” but now an Adversary. Then the Apostle says that we are not fighting mere flesh and blood, but Wicked Spirits in high places (Eph.6:12).

We are now entering an awesome period in human history--the time when Satan and his army of evil spirits will wage their supreme battle to overthrow God's people--just before the end of this age on earth. In Revelation 12:17 we are told that Satan has declared all-out war with the Remnant of God's people in the last days. We are warned that our Adversary, the Devil, “as a Roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Jesus foretold this period vividly: “For False Christ's and False Prophets will arise and will show “great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). It is time for all true people of God to awake to the great evil, which are in many Churches, that have been craftily put there by Satan through human agencies by the evil one. Christianity is a Gospel of Salvation; it is also a way of life.

Imitators have always plagued true religion. Alongside the faithful and true prophets of the Lord there were other men who had not received revelation from God. Jeremiah refused to have anything to do with these men (Jeremiah chapter 23). There were those who claimed to have received messages from God but who, as a matter of fact, did not receive such messages.

There are sincere theologians who teaches against the works of the devil and his demons, some of them even going so far as to cast out demons. Is it possible for such to be deluded by the very devil they preach against? “For such are False Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostle of Christ.” And it is no secret, for Satan himself is transformed into an “Angel of Light” (2 Cor.11:13-14).

So God did not Create a Devil. He Created a Cherub, Lucifer--perfect in his ways, but with the power of Free Choice--and Lucifer transformed himself into a Devil by rebelling against the Government of God.

It is dangerous to be caught off-guard when the enemy comes, "To steal, kill, and destroy." How crafty and deadly is our Adversary the Devil? We must never judge our steadfastness by the serenity we may enjoy today! Jesus told His disciples to "Watch and Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). Satan is bent on our destruction, and without God, we are no match for him.

God bless the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. And remember, no one who wants to do wrong should ever say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and He never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes by the lure of our own evil desires. "These evil desires lead to evil action, and evil action leads to death." So we must not be misled.

We can be completely assured of never being lost when we are fixed steadfastly in the Lord. If we will prepare for the worst, place no confidence in ourselves, give our lives into the care of the Almighty, and with all diligence "Put on Christ," then God will keep us ever secure.

In the writing of the Apostles and that of Paul, there is a continual concern for the welfare of the brethren. The ministers of Jesus knew the power of Satan and how he would attempt to deceive, if possible, the Very Elect. This vigil against error was of great concern to the Prophets of old. Man's deceptive mind is a continual threat to established truth, as found to be in many churches.

Satan's method was to work within the Church to create confusion by distracting people from the external appearance of truth. This he did by using false prophets and teachers who have risen within the Church in the name of truth yet speak lies and lead people away from God.

In God's overall plan of redemption, the Messiah was to come and establish the true Church with these words, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Satan was aware of the plan and looked forward to creating a Counterfeit church by appearing, as the Christ then, and as now, the head of a great group of Counterfeit Churches in Christ's name, claiming to be the True Church. The Bible calls this Church a "Mother of Harlots and Abomination of the earth" (Rev. 17:5).

Paul and others warn of a great apostasy—a "falling away"—from the Bible within (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). The apostasy had already started in that time. The Historians tells how after the death of the Apostles, heathen doctrines and festivals came in rapidly. Counterfeit Christians entered, bringing in their own heathen customs. The Gospel truth quickly lost its simplicity as the Greeks and Romans did their own work of remodeling, changing and substituting Pagan Traditions for Bible truth. These and other prophecies foretold of that time. It is sad but true that Protestants have carried over many of those Pagan church traditions, having no Bible foundation.

They are still man's tradition, and their teaching and belief in them are all in vain if they go against God's words! Remember--Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt.15:9).

What about our own traditions? Will they stand up under close scrutiny from God's words? What about Lent, Hot Cross Buns, Good Friday, Easter, (Christ was not crucified

on Friday; His resurrection was not on Sunday morning). How about our reasons for worshipping Christ on Sunday? Are they God's truth or merely tradition? Did Christ really do away with God's laws (Ten Commandments) as we are told, or is this still another tradition that has been sold to us by our teachers and churches? Or does it matter? Jesus said that it does matter! Let us research these traditions. We may think it really doesn't matter, but to God it means life or death.

Tradition is nothing more than rituals that have become comfortable and acceptable. Notice, we did not say that they are right, merely comfortable and acceptable. Let's look at some of these traditions to see if they are Biblically grounded or if we are defending man's tradition against God.

It is truly amazing that millions of people in this country observe Sunday instead of the Seventh day Sabbath, yet they do not have one Scriptural reference for proof that their actions are correct, not one. All of which means that if you are a Sunday observer, or a Christmas and Easter participant, if you celebrate Lent, Good Friday, and yes, All Saint's Day, you are following man's traditions (Mark 7:13; Col.2:8). Just remember, if these former pagan traditions are not found anywhere in the Holy Bible, then they cannot be from God, but from man.

Men have lost all deep respect for the Law, because they have forgotten the very source of all laws and authority. The Bible says: "There is one Law giver, who is able to save and destroy" (James 4:12). The Lawgiver is Almighty God. When you leave God out, there is no real standard of behavior left. The result is spiritual chaos and lawlessness and wretchedness in the human heart.

The Seventh day Sabbath is--God's Holy Memorial of the Perfect Kingdom given to man at creation. The Sabbath law is a moral law; it is not a type of things to come. A Bible study on "The Origin and Purpose of the Sabbath Day," shows that it was made for man (Mark 2:27), when man was perfect and Holy, who was enjoying the perfect kingdom created for him on earth. A review of texts in Hebrews 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chapter proves that the Sabbath was not given as a type of good things to come, but it was a Memorial of the original Kingdom given to man.

The blessing and sanctifying of the Seventh day made it His Holy Day. The Sabbath was done by declaration, or command by God. There is no other way for a day to be set apart as a Holy Day of rest for man, except by a declaration of God. It must be emphasized that the Ten Commandments are not the Law given by Moses, but they were declared and written by God, with His own finger (Ex.31:18).

The fulfillment of modern Christians is pictured in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the way of death." So why do men feel that they can choose their own way to serve God and that it will be acceptable to Him? Today there are hundreds of churches to choose from, but there is only one true way. It's God way!

Jesus foretold this period vividly: "For False Christ's and False Prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). It is time for all true people of God to awake to the great evil in many Churches that have been craftily put there by Satan through human agencies by the Evil one (Satan). Christianity is a gospel of Salvation; it is a Way of Life.

Imitators have always plagued true Religion. Alongside the faithful and True Prophets of the Lord there were other men who had not received a revelation from God. Jesus warned us about False Prophets and False teachers, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Gal.5:22-23)). Do men gather grapes or thorns, or figs or thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matt.7:15-20). The Pharisees, as a religious body, were now a plantation of trees, which God did not plant, water, nor own; therefore, they should be rooted up.

“For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:44-45). God draws men by His love, and by showing them what His love has done for them. God teaches a man to know himself; that finding his need of salvation he may flee the world to lay hold on the hope that his Heavenly Father has set before him in the gospel.

“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:18-19).

Probably, our Lord here refers to the people to whom He had just now preached, and who, it is likely, did not profit by the words spoken.

“The best of them (is) as a brier: the most upright (is sharper) than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen (and) thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity” (Micah 7:4).

They are useless in themselves (false prophets), and cannot be touched without wounding him that comes in contact with them. The day of thy watchmen, the day of vengeance, which the prophets have foreseen and proclaimed, is at hand.

The False teachers are so deceptive with their novel doctrines that they “Creep in unaware, ungodly men, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). And by their erroneous and counterfeit doctrine, they have denied the Lord! Do they deny the existence of God? No! They deny Him in other ways--mainly by claiming to be Christians, yet adhering to false doctrines that were not the original teaching of the Church.

Paul warned the brethren at Galatia to hold fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and not to be entangled with the feast days again which he called “the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

Men was following Paul in every town that he had preached, telling them they had to keep the ceremonial laws and to be circumcised according to the Mosaic Law instituted by the Levitical Priesthood. Paul stated that in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (Gal.5:6). These were the very Laws in which Paul stated they were a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Gal.3:24-25).

Here are just a few Scriptures that I would like to share with you just why Paul insisted on proving to you the Levitical Priesthood Laws was abolished at the cross. But the false religious teachers continue to repute his teaching.

Here are some of Paul's writings about the ceremonial laws as "done away with as spoken by Moses" (Deut.1:1-6), written by Moses, the words of the law "in a book" (Deut.31:24). Ezekiel wrote that God gave them judgments and statutes that were not good (Eze.20:25). Abolished the law "containing ordinances" (Eph.2:15). "Blotting out the handwriting of (these) ordinances, nailing (them) to the cross" (Col.2:14). For this law made nothing perfect. It completed nothing; it was only the outline of a great plan, the shadow of a glorious substance. It neither pardoned sin or purified the heart, nor gave strength to obey the moral precept. It pardoned no sin, changed no heart; reformed no life (Heb.7:19).

"Paul and some of the Apostles wrote letters to the churches at Antioch and Syria and Cilicia about certain men that were subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Hold fast your Christian profession; it brings spiritual liberty. To the contrary, Judasim brings spiritual bondage. The liberty mentioned by the Apostle is freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies called here "a yoke of bondage" (Gal.5.1).

Paul said it was a schoolmaster; thus the law did not teach us the living, saving knowledge by its sacrifices, it directed us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Gal.3:24-25).

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances.” By the handwriting of ordinances the apostle most evidently means the ceremonial laws that was contrary to them and nailed to his cross. When Christ was nailed to the cross, our obligation to fulfill these ordinances was done away with (Col.2:14).

Paul called it “the law of a carnal commandment” (Heb.7:16). “The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” The law, with all its ceremonies and sacrifices, was only a shadow of spiritual and eternal good, could never make a man thereunto perfect (Heb.10:1-10). No man was benefited by the mere observance of its precepts. It pardoned no sin; changed no heart, reformed no life (Heb.7:18).

“It was added because of transgressions.” It was given that we might know our sinfulness, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” (Galatians 3:19) The law was to be in force till the advent of the Messiah. After that it was to cease. In addition to those false shepherds there are those who are practicing signs and lying wonders in a grand effort to deceive people into believing that they possess divine power for healing and other miracles. Jesus made it clear that there would be many deceivers who would come in His name (Mark.7:7).

There is a plain warning to people that falsehood and deception would be prevalent in the so-called Christian world. Our God is a God of miracles and power, but He does not perform for entertainment or fun. His power was demonstrated as a ministry to help folks in their times of need and desperation.

We are now living at the end of this age! Crimes, drug addiction, alcoholism, pornography, divorces, out of wedlock birth, sexual activity among the very young, rock music, devious religious practice, political corruption, euthanasia, abortion, threats of nuclear confrontation, loss of patriotism and national pride, which is contributing to a condition that is called Babylon (Rev. chapter 17-18).

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter days, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils (Teaching of Demons), speaking Lies in Hypocrisy” (1 Tim.4:1-2). Out of the dragon (Satan’s) mouth there have been spewed forth not only many other fables, but also a flood of evil spirits who “anoint” those doctrines of error, to destroy the people of God, particularly in these days just before Christ returns.

In Matthew 24:11-13, Jesus foretold that because iniquity would abound, the love of many Christians would wax cold, and in Revelation 3:14-17, Jesus gave another prophetic picture of the Church in these last days, those whose love has become lukewarm. This Laodicean church; this Seventh Church, represents the general condition of modern Christendom; and is quite revealing, if we study closely what Jesus said to and about this Church. First, it will be noted that Jesus did not have one good thing to say about that Church. In verse 15-17, He stated, “I know you well--you are neither hot nor cold; I wish you were one or the other! But since you are merely lukewarm, I will spit you of my mouth! “You say, I am rich, with everything I want; I don’t need a thing!” And you don’t realize that spiritually you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Jesus has no use for modern Christendom as it is today. “I will spue thee out of my mouth is His verdict, unless individuals repent, as He says in verses 19-20. This is

the general attitude of the large Churches today. With all those Church buildings, and Universities, the great man-made organization has failed. There must be an awakening before God can help.

The Devil doesn't want us to know the truth. He wants us to think that just as long as the Church preaches Christ and says, "He is our personal Savior," we are saved, but even then we can be worshipping Him in vain (Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 7:7-8). Many Christians are living defeated lives because they are not aware of Biblical Laws that assure victory. The sad part of those prophecies is that "many" or most professed Christians follow the False Teachers.

Perversion has been Satan's method to deceive people-mixing error with truth and passing it all as Biblical Gospel. To do this there has to be a change in God's Words, by adding, subtracting, or relaxation (Revelation 22:19). Perversion of the Gospel had already begun in Paul's time, and he was very firm in denouncing such perversion as another gospel, not the truth (Galatians 1:6-10).

Not even an angel had any authority to make such changes, or perversion. Satan has Transformed himself into an Angel of Light and his Ministers as Ministers of Righteousness (2 Cor.11:13-15). Peter and Paul both warned us of False Preachers in the Churches, and many would follow after them-"Be not deceived by them" (2 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 20:28-31). In these last days this work of deceiving and being deceived is waxing worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13).

The Devil makes every effort to keep people from loosing the shackles of their Spiritual imprisonment. One ruse involves yanking the good news of Salvation from the minds of many before they grasp its excellence (Luke 8:12). Even those who have

accepted Jesus' saving grace--who are God's children--are not immune to the Devil's influence. The New Testament warns that Satan assaults members of God's Spiritual household (Revelation 12:17).

The great reason why there is so much False Religion in the world is because of the Adversary. Satan has counterfeited everything that God has given to us so we can have eternal life and live forever. He has not been content with one system of deception, but in order to appeal to all kinds of people he has caused many False Religions to grow up in the world. Pure, True Religion is the only Gospel that really stands the test of meeting the needs of lost mankind. God has outlined the manner of worship, the true religion, in His Divine Book, the Holy Bible. The Church must stand and preach this untarnished word of God.

The world has never before seen an age when so many people were claiming the name of "Christ" as there are today. But sad to say, among the great majority of these professing Christians, the "Virtues of Christ" cannot be found. The "wayfaring man" finds it very confusing in his search for God's true people.

Many people believe on Jesus as an historical figure, but they refuse to believe Him when they read His Words of Commands. The Words of Jesus are not mere suggestions, or recommendations for the Christians: they are Commands. The Order of Commands, of our Master has been despised by the lawless element of our days. It is time for us to examine the foundation of our Church and our faith.

Fellow Ministers and Teachers, let us openly declare that it is time for all men to obey the words of Jesus and the Bible, and to put into practice the things which He and the

Apostles preached. If we do this we will have a great reward, for our converts will not merely call themselves Christians. But they will in truth be children of the Living God.

Let us get back to the Blessed Old Book; the Bible, and then and not till then, can we expect that God will pour out His blessed Spirit upon us, as He did on the disciples at Pentecost. Paul and others warned of a great apostasy--a "falling away"--from the Bible truth, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1-12. The Apostasy had already started in that time. The Historian tells how after the death of the Apostles, heathen doctrines and festivals came in rapidly. Counterfeit Christians entered, bringing in their own heathen customs. The Gospel truth quickly lost its simplicity as the Greeks and Romans did their own works of remodeling, changing and substituting Pagan Traditions for Bible truths. These and other prophesies for told that time. It is sad but true that Protestants have carried over many of those Church Traditions having no Bible foundations.

It does not matter if man's traditions are taught by the Church, blest by the Church, and sanctified by the Church. They are still man's traditions, and their teaching and belief in them are all in vain if they go against God's words! Remember--Jesus said that to teach tradition in place of God's Commandments would do us no good (Matthew 15:9).

In nearly all-present--day religious denominations, the tendency is to try to "Modernize" God, and do away with His authority: to rule His creation--and the people He had created. There are very few truly "God fearing men" left on earth today. Yet, the real Message of Jesus Christ was about the God who created and who will soon rule the earth.

A spiritual world--if there were such a thing--would exist beyond the physical dimensions. It could not be measured or understood simply by physical senses. It would

be a world in which an event cannot normally be seen, felt, touched, tasted or heard. If it existed, it would be outside the normal human experience. In times past, most people had no difficulty believing they shared their existence with unseen forces and supernatural beings.

Unfortunately, not all that is in the spirit world is good, beneficial and helpful. There is a dark side. You cannot understand the spirit world without understanding the role of Satan, the devil, and ruler of the power of darkness, leader of the forces of the spiritual evil.

Although most people have some form of a belief in God, but many find it much harder to believe that there is a devil. That is exactly what the devil wants. If he can be in our mind and in our imagination, a bygone of fantasy of middle age superstition, he has the perfect disguise to perform his role of adversary of God and enemy of all mankind.

Satan and the demons would like to be our spiritual guides. They know that few of us would choose them voluntarily, but we can be deceived, when we are tempted by curiosity or ignorance, to seek the spiritual in the wrong way. However, the Apostle Paul told us that we need not to be "ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor.2:11).

His first "device" was to persuade Adam and Eve into disobeying from the start. From that day to this, he has not ceased to look for opportunities to deceive and confuse their descendants. You and I!

"And unto Adam He said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shall not eat of it: cursed (is) the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shall thou eat (of) it all the days of thy life; Thorns

also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shall eat the herb of the field)” (Gen.3:17-18).

This says that because Adam and Eve did what God told them not to do, and one of the curses that all mankind would have to endure would be the hardship of making a living. Instead of producing nourishing grain and useful vegetables, noxious weeds would increase in number; injuring the ground; choking the good seed. Thorns and thistles would hinder mankind through out life. See the parable of the seed (Matt.13:1-9).

“They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, (but) shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the Lord” (Jer.12:13).

Mankind has been spiritually blinded by Satan (2 Cor.4:4). As a result, human history has been little more than a chronicle of suffering, warfare, disease, injustice, oppression and all attendant evils.

Do you or anyone think we are overstating the case about all of Paul’s problems? The Bible warns us, with good reason, to “Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph.5:11).

Man in this age can never be completely free of Satan’s influence. It contaminates all aspects of life today--politics, music, entertainment, education and even religion. The Apostle Paul described Satan as the “god of this world” (2 Cor.4:4), “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph.2:2).

Satan can prey upon attitude, moods and feelings. He is especially tuned to those negative emotions like vanity, pride, hurt feelings, revenge and lust. He is ready to fan

the smoldering of discontentment into flames of hatred, and is always eager to coax the first stirring of temptation into the reality of sin.

Satan's rule as "god of this world" will soon be over when he is removed and replaced by Jesus at His return. But until that happens we must be aware of him. We must be aware, but not afraid. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

To cultivate spiritual influence, we need spiritual power. Human beings were created in the image of God, but with a physical frame. How then do we get the spiritual power to resist Satan and worship God? By putting on the whole Armour of God" (Eph.6:11-18). Before human beings can inherit eternal life, they must develop the nature of God, "being born again." We must learn to live as God does, which means we must learn to think and act as God does. For this to happen, there must be a partnership between us and God, "called repentance."

The spirit endowed men with wisdom and skills: "And I filled him with the Spirit (Power) of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:3).

The Spirit imparted Power for special works: "And, behold, a young lion roared against him (Samson)." "And the Spirit (Power) of Jehovah came mighty upon him, and he rent him (Lion) as he would have rent a kid (Lamb)" (Judges 14:5-6).

The Spirit inspired the prophets to speak God's message: "And the Spirit entered me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, and I heard Him (God) that spake unto me" (Eze.2:2).

Peter declared that the Holy Spirit guided the men who wrote the Old Testament Scriptures: “But men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit: (2 Peter 1:21). It is in the New Testament that we find the full doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not a person but the Power of God. When we speak of a person, we think of an individual separate and distinct from others. But when we speak of the Holy Spirit, we mean what has been described as the inner power of God.

The Holy Spirit is represented as doing the works of God. The Spirit testifies; the Spirit reproves; the Spirit comforts; teaches, guides, strives, and helps. Such things as these can only be done by the power, which comes from God in Heaven.

Jesus knew that without Him there to set examples they would certainly fail. They needed to be able to draw on the strength and power of God, as He had. So He promised to send, and all who followed them, Spiritual help.

Jesus did ascend to the Father’s right hand in heaven as the Scripture teaches, but He did not leave His children alone, or orphans. Another Comforter He promised to give—God’s Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that His Children would not be left as orphans to fight their battles alone when He went to heaven. In His parting message to His disciples in the upper room, He said: “I will pray the Father, and He shall give another Comforter, that He (Holy Spirit) may be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth,” “But the Comforter, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things,” “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” (John 16:7).

With the Holy Spirit's help, our lives will begin to show the fruits of the Spirit, which the Bible tells us are: "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law" (Galatians 22, 23).

Through the Spirit, God gives us spiritual insight and leads us toward eternal life in a safe, controlled and disciplined manner.

Eternal life in the spirit realm with all its power and splendor is waiting for us. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" wrote the Apostle Paul (1 Cor.2:9-10).

The heavens certainly declare God's glory (Psa.19:1-6). They can inspire us with a greater understanding of His power and Majesty. But wisdom, guidance, understanding and the forming of an individual's character comes from obeying the Laws and statutes of God.

When Paul was on his way to persecute the Christians at Damascus, a great transforming crisis in his life occurred. On that dusty road is where the Divine grace and power changed him and commissioned him as Christ's messenger.

His first missionary journey began with the work among the Jews on Cyprus. The steps of the Apostle Paul were to carry the Gospel to untrodden regions of Asia Minor. After much opposition from the Jewish leaders that followed Paul throughout the region, and with such opposition from the Pharisaic party, Paul turned to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles by teaching Salvation solely through Faith in Jesus Christ. But constant and fierce opposition marked the work. Finally, Paul was executed at Rome in early A.D. 67 by Rome's tradition and custom of beheading their victims.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Our life in Christ is too often seen in terms of what we do rather than who we are. Since our words and action are the manifestation of who we are, changes must begin inside. Transformation takes place not from the outside in but the inside out. Before our lives and words truly are conformed, first our heart must be conformed to Christ (2 Cor.5:17).

Fortunately, this task is not left up to us alone. Paul promises that we will be made “the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus is going to live through us; the righteousness we have isn’t our own, but it’s His. If we are to become Christlike, we must do what Christ did and be what He was (2 Cor.5:21).

Like Paul, we can’t be perfect or Christlike on our own, but if He lives through us, we can. Spiritual discipline doesn’t bring the needed transformation, but it provides the “good soil” (Matt.13:8), for the Spirit to do the work. Spiritual discipline is the way we

submit ourselves to God, our desires and our feeble efforts to the changing of our structure only by the Holy Spirit.

If man would only believe God and realize that the Lord is not interested in a “sinful kingdom,” then God could reveal unto them the wonders of His kingdom as it really is. And they could sit with Him in heavenly places, for this is the inheritance of His people (Eph.2:6).

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