



Jesus Christ The Savior of the World

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

John 6:47

Dedicated to the least of his brethren
Matthew 25:40

Preface

I am writing this book for all men, but especially for Christians among whom there are many who spend their days in sighing and have found no relief. When we read the New Testament, one thing that becomes evident is that Jesus' heart was always toward the weak and oppressed and he came for those who were lost. His heart is no different today and his thoughts are ever toward that one sheep that has gone astray. He values that one sheep above all else.

My only goal in writing this book is that Jesus might heal his body. My heart's desire is that you might see the Savior Jesus and know him more. Jesus said in John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Yes! Thanks to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins, whoever believes in him has everlasting life. This everlasting life is for today. Jesus said "hath" (which is an older form of the word "has"). Jesus did not say "will have." Whoever believes on Jesus "has" everlasting life! In other words, this life is not only something that can be experienced and enjoyed in heaven, but it is for today. Life is good and today is the day of your salvation and freedom. Jesus is the giver of life, and he came for you, wherever you may be.

Contents

Chapter One: Jesus Christ the Savior of the World	1
Chapter Two: The New Life in Jesus Christ	23
Chapter Three: The Firstfruits of Living in Christ	34
Chapter Four: Faith in Jesus that Works by Love	47
Chapter Five: Beholding the Glory of Jesus	57

Chapter One: Jesus Christ the Savior of the World

The most important issue facing every human-being born into the world is the salvation of the soul. This is the most urgent need for all men, young or old. What is the meaning of life? Who made me? Why am I here? Why must I die? Why is there suffering? How can I escape a guilty conscience and sense of condemnation? How can I have lasting peace and happiness? How can I get the power and wisdom to live a good life? These are among the many questions asked by people of all nationalities and backgrounds. The good news is that there is an answer to these questions. The answer is Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

I would like to start this chapter by saying that this chapter is the most important chapter in this whole book. The reason this chapter is the most important is because it contains the most important promise in the Bible, John 6:47. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” This simple promise is like water to a thirsty and parched land. This verse is simple enough that even a child can understand it and it's gentle enough that even the chief of sinners can take hope and refuge in it. Jesus is the Savior and these are the words of his salvation. These are the words that he saves men with. I would like to spend the rest of this chapter examining this verse. So, if you need a Savior and if you are tired and weary of your sin and if you need a new life, then please receive the things that are written in this chapter. I believe Jesus and I know that he is the Savior of the world and I know that he desires to save you just as you are right now.

Let me ask you a question: Why did Jesus come into the world? The Apostle Paul answers this question when he says, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15) In fact, the name Jesus itself is interpreted to mean “Savior” or “God is salvation.” We read in Matthew 1:21 “And she shall bring forth

a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Likewise “Christ” refers to the “anointed one” who was to save Israel. This is very important information because if we are to be saved, we must see Jesus as 100% Savior and nothing else. I know that he is Lord and Master and Teacher, but if we are to be saved, we must see him as Savior and nothing else. Jesus’ death on the cross shows us that he is Savior. We must receive this message. In addition, we also find a very important verse in Luke 2:11. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” This verse teaches us that Jesus is Lord, but also that he decided to become the Savior. The Lord becomes Savior. We don’t make Jesus Lord so that he can become our Savior. Rather, he is Lord already, but he decided to become Savior. Jesus is Master, but he decided to become a servant. We must see him as Savior. He came so that we would see him as Savior. It was Jesus’ own choice to come into the world and become Savior. Who did he come to save? “He came to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15) A sinner is a person who can’t call Jesus “Lord.” In fact, the Bible teaches that those who are saved were dead in sin and enemies of God. (Ephesians 2:1 and Romans 5:10) This is exactly why we must see Jesus as Savior. Jesus came to save people who can’t repent or promise to do better. Jesus came to save people who can’t pick up their crosses and follow him. A sinner has no power at all and can do nothing good for the Lord. So, knowing that Jesus came to save is truly wonderful news. Are you tired and weary and sick? Are you stuck in a cycle of ups and downs with no sign of freedom? Are you heavy burdened with sin and guilt? Do you fear death and damnation? If yes, then you need a Savior now. If you don’t need a Savior, then you can’t be saved. Jesus didn’t come for people who merely want their lives changed. He came for people who need a completely new life.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47) This is probably the simplest promise given in the Bible. Jesus has made it simple for us. Jesus himself

testified that the Kingdom of heaven is for little children and that we must receive it as little children. (Luke 18:16-17) Thus, we must receive this promise of everlasting life as little children and just believe that Jesus is able to do what he promised. (Romans 4:21) If we receive this one verse as little children by just believing it, we will then know the salvation of God and we will truly know that the death of Jesus Christ was fully sufficient to take away our sins and reconcile us. We will then know complete freedom from sin, strength of mind, love, godliness, and peace that runs like a river. You may be asking yourself, “How?” and “How do you interpret all of that out of this one scripture?” Well, in light of the fact that Jesus knew completely well what his death on the cross was going to accomplish when he spoke these words, I'm also going to try to explain what this verse means with full consideration given to the accomplished work of the cross. Words are just words and promises are just promises, but the promise of Jesus Christ is bought and paid for with his own blood. The death and resurrection are our assurance that his words are indeed true. In other words, our trust in Jesus Christ is grounded and settled on the cross of Calvary, which was an act displayed openly for the whole world to see and confirm. And, as God is faithful, the Bible and all of recorded history do indeed confirm the truthfulness of the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, let's take courage and let's believe the promise of Jesus.

With due consideration given to the above explanation, I am going to spend the rest of this chapter examining the promise found in John 6:47, for it is in this verse that we come to know the salvation of Jesus Christ. This verse tells us what salvation is, when we can come to receive it, who the implementer of it is, and how one comes to obtain it. I would like to quickly go over these four points as well as briefly describe the significance of receiving this promise. If we cover these five areas, we will have a better understanding of the greatness of this promise. So, first, let's just

take a look at what this verse says, and then after we do that, we can proceed to understand the significance of receiving this promise and the effects it has on our lives.

Let's start by looking at what this verse says about salvation. What is salvation? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Everlasting life is salvation. The reason I say this is because all human beings die. All humans have fear and sense condemnation. Death is an enemy that no man has been able to defeat and the power of death is sin. (1 Corinthians 15:56) Humans need to be saved from death and condemnation. So, in this respect, everlasting life is the salvation that humans need. Now, I have no intention of trying to explain the glories of everlasting life, but I would like to propose two undeniable facts about it. First, everlasting life is good. Life is good. This is a fact that no man can deny. Only those who live their lives in bitterness and darkness would try to deny this fact. These types of people have no idea what true life is. Living in bitterness and darkness is not true life. True life is good. Second, those who possess everlasting life lack nothing. Life is good, but everlasting life is infinitely good where there is no darkness or death. There is no fear of losing something that is everlasting and there is no need to gain something if you possess that which is infinitely good.

Jesus came into the world and died for our sins on the cross so that we could live. His death on the cross bought us the right to everlasting life, and we see the power of this life in his resurrection. Knowing this man is life. Not only this, but the Apostle John, in his first letter, tells us that Jesus Christ himself is everlasting life and that eternal life dwells in him. (1 John 5:11 and 5:20) So, everlasting life is Jesus himself and all that he is. It is true, immortal, flawless, blessed, virtuous, good, lovely, and whatever other good things there may be. There are not enough words in all of the languages of the world to describe the breadth, length, depth, and height of everlasting life, which is Jesus Christ himself.

Next, let's take a look at what the verse says about when we can come to receive this salvation. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." This verse says "hath," which is an older English form of the word "has." The word "hath" is in the present tense. This is truly glorious news. Salvation may have been glorious enough if Jesus had said, "He that believeth on me 'will have' everlasting life," but to our joy and relief he says, "He that believeth on me 'hath' everlasting life." Now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2) Amen. The day of our salvation is today. Thus, it is a mistake to think that the glories of salvation can only be enjoyed once we enter heaven. The perfection of everlasting life is something that is for today. We must realize this and receive this truth if we are to find perfect freedom of salvation in this world. I know that the glories in heaven will exceed the glories on earth just as our heavenly bodies will exceed the glory of our earthy bodies, but the glory of this salvation which we can experience now is also eternal in its power and greatness.

Let's move on to what this verse says about who the implementer of this salvation is. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Who is "me" in this verse? It is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the initiator, implementer, and giver of our salvation. Please note that in this verse Jesus didn't say, "He that believeth on 'God' hath everlasting life." He also didn't say, "He that believeth 'the teachings of XYZ Church' hath everlasting life." Jesus clearly says, "me." To whom are we looking? Are our eyes on someone or something other than Jesus? If so, no wonder there is so much weakness. No wonder there are so many confessions of sin being made day after day and week after week without end. If our eyes are focused on the Father, the Holy Ghost, the apostles, or anyone else, it is no wonder that there is no perfect freedom of salvation. If our Bible studies mainly consist of learning about theological systems, the law, the grace of God, dispensations, covenants, history, or any other thing, it is no

wonder that there is so much dullness and weakness and sickness. I am not saying that these things are bad, in fact, they are wonderful, but our eyes and minds must be fixed upon the Savior Jesus and nothing else. If we do this, we will see more clearly to understand the rest of God's plans for the world. However, everything is centered on Jesus. He is all in all. Hallelujah!

Finally, let's take a look at what this verse says about how one comes to obtain salvation. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." We come to obtain this salvation by "believing." This is glorious news because this makes salvation accessible to all. Are you heavy burdened with sin and powerless to even try to repent? Are you at the end of your rope and see no hope at all? This salvation is especially for you. Not only this, but we can enter into salvation instantaneously the moment we see Jesus the Savior and put our trust in him. Not to sound repetitive, but please note that Jesus didn't say, "He that 'follows' me hath everlasting life." He also didn't say, "He that 'makes me Lord of his life' hath everlasting life." Nor did he say, "He that 'prays and waits and seeks and makes promises' hath everlasting life." In the simplest of words, Jesus says "believe." This is a word that even a child can understand, so we need not think that "believe" has some dark and hidden meaning. In a verse similar to John 6:47, we read, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12) In this verse, we read, "believe on his name." That's it and nothing else. We must interpret the word "believe" to mean exactly what it means in its most natural and basic sense. We must receive this verse as little children. Thank God this verse says "believe." Anyone can come into the fullness of true salvation here and now.

Before we look at the applications of the promise, I would just like to briefly describe the significance of receiving a promise from God. Paul tells us in his letter to the Hebrews that God's promises are immutable, which means that they can in no way be

cancelled. (Hebrews 6:16-18) This means that the recipients of a promise can rest assured that the promise will be performed in its entirety. Once again, here's the promise given to us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Notice that Jesus qualifies his promise by the words "Verily, verily." It is as if he wanted to alleviate any doubt and solidify the certainty of what he was about to say. The promises of Jesus cannot fail. Jesus confirmed this when he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Luke 21:33) Let's take rest in the promise given us, for it cannot fail.

Now at this point, someone might object and say, "While it is true that there are some wonderful promises given to us by Jesus, it is also true that Jesus himself has many hard things to say such as the need for us to pick up our own crosses and follow him. He also said that we need to hate our own fathers, mothers, wives, siblings, children, and even our own lives for his sake." (Luke 14:25-33) This cannot be denied. Jesus says some soft and kind things, but he also says some hard and severe things. Not only this, but later on in the Bible some of the apostles including Paul, and especially James, have some particularly strong reproofs and rebukes for people in the church who are not walking lawfully. Even more yet, Jesus himself in the Book of Revelation makes threats to churches and individuals who have backslidden. So, it is true that even when a wonderful promise is given to us, it may be followed up by many fearful threats, reproofs, and hard sayings. Can the fearful and hard verses cancel the promise? Or can threats and judgments cancel the promise? No way. God forbid. Nothing can cancel the promise. The promise trumps all else. Wasn't it the same way in the Old Testament? Abraham received a promise, but afterwards the law came. Did the law cancel the promise? No, it didn't. Paul explains this very thing when he says, "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

(Galatians 3:17) In fact, probably over 99% of the Old Testament is about law. Can God's own word cancel his promise? No way. Paul goes on to explain in the same chapter of Galatians that the law and everything else that we find in the Bible in no way contradict the promise. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." (Galatians 3:21) The problem often is that when we read the Bible, we often see things through the lens of the law instead of the lens of faith in Jesus Christ. Things are no different in the New Testament. That is why verses like John 6:47 and Luke 14:25-33 seem to contradict each other. The truth is, however, that men cannot do what Jesus says in Luke 14:25-33. But if they just believe the promise of John 6:47, the things that Jesus speaks of in Luke 14:25-33 become possible and even natural. So, we see that nothing can cancel the promise that has been given to us. Therefore, let's hold on tight to it and never give it up. Let's believe it regardless of what our eyes may see and regardless of what our feelings or our own hearts may tell us. Many men and devils would like to rob us of this promise, but we cannot relinquish it or give it away. We cannot compromise it even in the slightest way. This promise is ours and we are going to our deaths with it in hand. We must fix our hearts on this. We must believe that Jesus is faithful to do that which he promised. (Romans 4:21) We see the cross and resurrection and receive assurance that this man Jesus is the Savior of the world and that he is faithful and true. He will do that which he promised. His salvation, which he bought for us at the cross, is imparted to us by faith in him. This is what this promise in John 6:47 teaches. Let's take hold of it and hold onto it with all of our strength.

Now that we have laid the groundwork for this verse and also looked at the significance of receiving a promise, let's look at what some of the effects and applications of the promise are in our lives. It would be impossible to list all of them, so I'd like to just mention a few of the greatest and most glorious.

First and foremost, we come into a relationship of peace, love,

dependency, and friendship with Jesus. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Jesus is salvation. Jesus is everlasting life. Jesus is heaven. Jesus is what we get and he is our portion from God. We receive salvation by believing on him. Oh, we trust him with our past, present, and future. Receiving him is like falling in love. Yes, salvation is romantic and he is the lover of our souls! John tells us in his first letter that “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” (1 John 5:1) The moment we believe in Jesus we are made alive. We are raised from the dead and receive a new life. (Ephesians 2:1) We awake to behold our Savior. He is so near that it is as if we are face to face. We know that it is he who has given us life and loved us. He becomes our all in all, our breath, our only desire. The sweetest times of the day are when we are daydreaming about him or singing his praises with brothers and sisters. We are one in him, and his body, which is the church, is altogether lovely. He is the head and we are the body. He is in us and we are in him. He is everything. We grow in his knowledge, his love, and his grace, and our greatest desire becomes just to be with him. There is none besides him and our prayers unite as we say “Come quickly!”

I think that the following poem will clarify what I am trying to say more than a thousand page book trying to explain the same thing. This poem describes our mind in Jesus Christ:

Yearning, longing, sighing for the perfection of the body and the return of Jesus

Empty my heart and sacrifice my body for our body

Oh, for greater intimacy with the body

We would worship him and lay our lives down

Give me Jesus or give me death

He made himself known to me and helped me

He touched me

He comforted me

I saw horror face to face and made my bed with death
He helped me
Let's come together and let's thank him
Let's love each other and make sacrifices for one another
Let's receive one another
Let's know him and long for him so that heaven and earth pass
away and there we are face to face; we fall down before the man
and know that he is God and none else; he sustains us and we melt
away in a sweet abode
Tears of joy and heart cryings and breakings go before him
because he is altogether beautiful
His beauty is radiant and he is white and clean and pure — oh,
sacred heart; he is a good man and we need him
He is the breath of our nostrils and our breath and he takes our
breath away
He is our life and he is life
Teach me your love and take my heart away
Your love is brilliant
Teach me your love — I long for it
Teach me your heart and tell me you love me
Tell me you desire me and long for me
Tell me you can't bear to be without me and I am your joy
I am the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the fields
You desire to meet me and spend time with me
Let my heart always be the same and I'll spend eternity in your
presence; I'll always be before you

Jesus is our portion for all eternity. If he isn't our greatest desire, then our hearts are in the wrong place. Can two lovers be separated by the great sea and not long to see one another? Wouldn't their only desire be to be together again? However, what if they had a chance to be together, but they said, "No thank you. We prefer being separated"? Can we call this love? Some might, but I know that many more would doubt their love as being not

genuine. It is the same with us and Jesus. We are now separated, but isn't our greatest desire to be with him face to face? Don't we want to hasten the day of his return? (Hebrews 9:28 and 2 Peter 3:12) Jesus is our greatest treasure and he is our delight and daydream.

As recipients of everlasting life, which is Jesus Christ himself, we are complete. Having received Jesus and the fullness of him, we have attained God's calling for us. In other words, there is no need for you to become some "great spiritual one," for you are great and there is no man above you. You possess Jesus and you are to spend the rest of your life enjoying him. In Jesus, there is equality, and all believers in him possess the same thing, which is Jesus himself. There is never any reason to feel inferior. Just open your eyes and see Jesus, for he is your great prize and inheritance.

Okay, I think we'll move on to the next effect of the promise. All who believe in Jesus receive power. If you possess everlasting life, can anything hurt you? If you possess everlasting life, is there any reason for weakness? Absolutely not, and we have to believe this. Everlasting life is what we are promised. We learn in the Bible that Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by the power of God. (2 Corinthians 13:4) We likewise are weak, but through his resurrection, we become direct participants in the power of God. We live, not in the crucified Christ, but in the resurrected Christ. (Romans 6:4-5) He died for us at the cross and bought our redemption through his own blood. Yet, he didn't stay dead. He rose again! The Bible teaches that we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. (Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 1:27) This is the resurrected Christ who lives in us, and we live in the power of this living Christ.

There is no excuse for weakness in our lives, since we are partakers of this everlasting life, which is Jesus Christ himself. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." We really have to get this into our heads that we are indeed partakers of life. Though there be a thousand voices

against us and though our emotions are always changing, we must believe that we have the power of everlasting life to reign in life and reign over all the enemies of our minds. "...They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17) In John 6:45, just two verses before our promise, Jesus says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God..." (John 6:45) This verse is found in Isaiah 54:13. "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." In this same passage of scripture we also read, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17) I love this verse because it gives us a small glimpse of just how wonderful the inheritance of those who are taught by God the Father to believe on Jesus Christ is. Can any enemy hurt us? Can depression or sin defeat you? Never, for it is written that "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper"! Is there something or someone that just keeps nagging your conscious? Are you being accused? Are you accusing yourself? Do you feel guilty? Impossible, for it is written that "every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Do you have to try harder and keep making resolutions to sacrifice everything for God? Do you have to keep repenting again and again? No way, for it is written that "their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." Are these earned through hard work or obtained through one's own striving for masteries? No, these things are received as an inheritance for free, for it is written, "This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD." Now, let me just say that this is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, so can we even begin to imagine how much greater the inheritance of the sons of God is? (John 1:12) The sons of the God receive an inheritance of everlasting life through Jesus Christ. Are you enjoying your inheritance? I hope so. If not, I would like you to

think about something. Let's imagine, for example, that a father gives his son an inheritance. How would that father feel if the son refused it or belittled it? That father would feel terrible to say the least. Well, it is exactly the same when we don't believe the Father who sent Jesus into the world. He has all of these good things for us, which he has given to us in Jesus, but if we remain in weakness and unbelief, it is as if we are refusing his goodness. If your father has prepared steak and lobster and the choicest of wines for you, but you prefer to eat stale bread and drink muddied water, how would he feel? He would feel devastated. So, let's take hold of our inheritance. Yea, rather, let's take hold of it with violence! (Matthew 11:12)

Let's look at a few verses that speak particularly about us receiving power through belief in Jesus. In John 1:12 we read, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Power to become the sons of God. Can a son of God do any evil? No, a son of God is perfect. We receive power. Another verse is found in Romans 1:16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Do you need salvation? Are you experiencing salvation? Well, let me tell you that if you have no power, then you are not experiencing salvation. If you are in trouble, any kind of trouble, and you need salvation, then you need the power of God. How does one receive this power? By believing the Gospel of Christ! One more verse that speaks of the power that is given us through Jesus is 2 Timothy 1:7. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." We as believers in Jesus have these things. We do not need to act like we are still trying to obtain them. Let's live in the power of this salvation which is through faith in the Savior!

Another result of believing in Jesus is that we become perfect. Now I know that it is mostly taught that we acquire a "positional perfection" before God. From my experiences with this teaching,

it is usually taught that we are perfect in our standing before God on account of Jesus' sacrifice for us, yet still sinful in our daily lives. The doctrine usually goes on to teach that believers spend their whole lives going through a stage of "relative perfection" where they are matured or sanctified (made holy) little by little. "Ultimate perfection" isn't attained until we receive our resurrected spiritual bodies and enter into a glorified state.

The sum of the above doctrine, therefore, is that although we are perfect before God, we spend our whole lives on earth going from one sinful state to a little less sinful state, mourning in our bodies until our final redemption when we receive a sinless and perfect spiritual body. I would like to say, however, that to the extent that my understanding of this doctrine is correct, it is absolutely rubbish. I say this because the Bible teaches that we do not go from sin to sin in this life, but we go from glory to glory. (2 Corinthians 3:18) Isn't this the whole point of being set free from sin? (John 8:33-36) If we "have" everlasting life, what darkness can there be? What imperfection can there be if we "have" everlasting life right now? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Before I go on and explain what I mean in greater detail, I would just like to clarify that I am not saying that it is impossible for Christians to sin. However, I am saying that it is possible for Christians not to sin. Not only is it possible, but it is natural for Christians to consistently live without sin in their daily lives. Living a good and holy life that is completely free from sin is what we should expect. We are God's workmanship, created unto good works in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:1)

Now, I could show you a long list of scriptures from the Bible to prove that we become perfect not only in a "positional-sense," but also in an experimental-sense (perfect in our day-to-day lives). However, I will not. Instead of giving you a long list of verses to look up in the Bible to show you that Christians are indeed perfect and sinless, I would much rather you just believe what Jesus says

in John 6:47. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” These words are very simple and clear. So, let’s hold on to this promise and let’s not give it up regardless of whatever you read, hear, or are taught.

I realize that many people will object and say, “But I am in fact sinful and no matter how hard I try, I still fall into sin.” I would like to say emphatically that the reason you see yourself as a sinner and have no freedom from sin is simply because you don’t believe that Jesus has done, is doing, and will continue doing what he said he would do for those who believe on him. Jesus came to forgive you, set you free from sin, and give you everlasting life. Let me just say that if you continue to believe that you are still a sinner, you will be a sinner. However, if you believe that you are made the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, then you will live righteously. Let me just say again that if you profess faith in Jesus, but still see yourself as a sinner, your sinfulness comes from the fact that you have received and believe an inferior gospel, and thus, continue to go on in weakness and negative thought instead of child-like faith in the promise of Jesus Christ. You continue to look at yourself through the lens of the law instead of the lens of faith in Jesus. If Jesus has promised us everlasting life, why should we doubt him? Yea, let heaven and earth deny, but we will believe. Regardless of what your eyes may see or your ears might hear, believe! Regardless of what your heart or conscience might say, believe! Regardless of what evil spirits might whisper in your ear, believe! Regardless of what accusations might pop up in your heart, believe! We believe that we have everlasting life and are perfect according to the promise Jesus made himself.

Okay, once again, I think I better make clarification here just so that people do not misunderstand the point of what I am saying. We can expect to live righteously and perfectly because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. However, we can never rest or take comfort in how well we are living. Rather, our eyes always have to

be on the cross. The shed blood of Jesus Christ is our only righteousness. As I mentioned above, I am not saying that it is impossible for Christians to sin. I am only saying that it is possible and much more natural for Christians not to sin. So, what should we do if we were to sin? Or what should we do if we feel convicted by sin? (Whether convictions of sin are really on account of sin, I don't know. It could just be the devil whispering groundless accusations into the heart and ears.) In such a case of either true or imaginary sin, our eyes must not turn from the cross. We must not get carried away with emotion or, worse yet, despair. The cross has always been our only resting place and we have been completely forgiven on account of it. There is no need for sorrowing, no need for penance, no need to ask for forgiveness. Our sins have been completely paid for and forgiven because of the cross. We see the cross and know that everything is okay. We then continue on living and expecting the perfection of Jesus Christ to be with us in our day-to-day lives. True righteousness, sinlessness, and perfection are ours in Jesus and we have to expect to live sinless and in holiness before our God.

I would now like all believers in Jesus Christ to think about something. What did the cross of Jesus Christ mean? Wasn't it the death of sin? Please read Romans 6:1-11 carefully, for these verses clearly say that sin is dead through the death of Jesus and that life is alive through the resurrection of Jesus. Now if we continue to believe that sin can exist and be a common element of our daily lives, we are essentially saying that the death of Jesus means nothing and that the cross has failed. If we continue to believe that we are still sinners and have to continually confess and repent our sins day after day and week after week, then we are basically saying that Jesus' death was meaningless. Furthermore, we would be essentially living as they did in the Old Testament before the death of Jesus. In the Old Testament there were sacrifices made for sins every day, which sacrifices could in no way cleanse the consciences of the people who sacrificed them. (Hebrews 10:1-3

and 10:11) The death of Jesus, however, was a once and for all sacrifice that has brought in perfection forever. (Hebrews 10:14) Therefore, if we keep telling ourselves and believing that we sin again and again and that confession and repentance need to be made over and over again, then we are essentially believing that the cross failed and is useless. We would be saying that the sacrifice at the cross is in all ways the same as the animal sacrifices made in the Old Testament. (This is essentially what we do when we plead his blood again and again. It is as if we are sacrificing Christ again and again.) However, Jesus died once so that we could be free from sin and a guilty conscience. He rose from the dead and lives. And we, likewise, live with him in true holiness and righteousness. We have a better promise than those Old Testament covenant keepers. (Hebrews 7:22) So, please believe Jesus and stop living so cowardly! “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

There may be some people at this point who are confused by what exactly I mean as perfection. As mentioned above, I do mean sinlessness. Sin is that which transgresses the law, and thus, sinlessness is that which fulfills the law of God. (1 John 3:4) However, that which fulfills the law is summed up in one word, namely, “love.” (Romans 13:10) We find in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that after we believe in Jesus, we are changed from glory to glory (not from one sinful state to another sinful state, which is a little less sinful). So, the meaning of being changed from glory to glory is that we are changed from one state of love to another state which has even more love. In other words, I love people today, but I will love people even more tomorrow as I am changed from glory to glory. This transformation from glory to glory continues throughout our entire lives. When the Lord Jesus finally returns, we will then enter a state of ultimate glorification.

I realize that talking about perfection is a sensitive and dangerous topic as some people might be tempted to be puffed up. However, there is no reason to be puffed up at all. In fact, when

Jesus Christ came to earth to die for the sins of men, he was not so much interested in making individual men holy and sinless as he was interested in making a perfect body (the church). (Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25-27) In other words, Jesus has very little interest in individual righteousness, but his interest lies mainly in a corporate perfection and righteousness which is found in the whole body of believers. Thus, as long as there is some imperfection in the body as a whole, individual believers cannot be said to be ultimately perfect. We learn that the body will be continually perfected until we become perfect in one. (Ephesians 4:12-13) When Jesus finally returns we will be gathered up as one and presented to him as a perfect and holy and glorious church. (Ephesians 1:10 and Ephesians 5:25-27) When we see him face to face, we shall be united with our head and we shall ever remain perfect in one in him. Hallelujah!

To conclude this section on believers' perfection, I would just like to say again that ultimate perfection and glory is not found in individual believers, but in the body of believers. (John 17:23 and Hebrews 11:40) This is why we read so many times in the New Testament the commandment to love one another. (John 13:34, Romans 13:8, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 John 3:11, etc.) Jesus' main purpose is to have us believers perfected in his body as we love one another, receive one another's love, and behold the glory of the Son of God. (John 17:23-24) The moment that all believers as a body become perfect in one is the moment that all individual believers experience ultimate perfection. Though a man be as a holy as an arch-angel or even as holy as Jesus himself, this profits him nothing as long as the body is incomplete and imperfect. (1 Corinthians 12:26) In fact, if a man were to think of himself as being as holy as an arch-angel when the rest of the body is suffering, he would be just deceiving himself, for he himself needs the love and nourishment that other members of the body can give him. In other words, we all need one another and there is no member of the body that is not needed. (1 Corinthians 12:20-27)

All members are equally essential and our ultimate perfection is found in becoming one in Jesus Christ our head. All members of the body grow up in our head, Jesus, through belief in him. The result of our faith in Jesus is that we live in his body and have mutual care and love for one another as he supplies us with his love and grace. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

The last thing I want to mention about the effects of the promise is that we receive freedom. More precisely, I would like to say that we receive freedom to rest and freedom to love. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” When you possess everlasting life, which is Jesus himself, you lack nothing and there is nothing more to seek after to acquire. Furthermore, you have nothing to fear. Thus, we can truly rest and we can truly love. These are two themes that I want to talk about later. However, for right now, I would still like to mention a few points about resting and loving.

The freedom to rest is a great privilege that we believers in Jesus possess. Jesus made an invitation to this rest when he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest is something that is directly related to salvation. In Hebrews 4, salvation is likened to entering into God's rest. Just as God rested on the seventh day of creation, we also are to cease from our own works to enter into the rest of God. (Hebrews 4:4,10) The weary can truly rest and know that God will bear the entire burden. Salvation is like entering into an eternal sabbath. Let all those who know this rest shout “Hallelujah!”

Personally, I also like to associate resting with peace of mind and stillness, so I particularly like the following verse found in the Isaiah 26. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” We have to understand that as believers in Jesus, it is our inheritance and right to partake in continuous peace and calmness. We should expect Jesus to keep us in this state of rest, regardless of what situation we find ourselves in. He is faithful to do it. However, at the same

time, resting is no obligation. In Jesus, we receive complete freedom, so a man may desire a time not to rest. This may be in a case of urgency such as when a fellow believer or family member is in great need. For love's sake, he feels a great sense of urgency and refuses rest as he relentlessly brings his petitions before the throne of the Lord and wears his own body trying to actually meet those needs to the extent that they are physically possible. The freedom to rest is still his, but the freedom he has to love may often, as it were, compel him to action.

This brings me to the next thing I would like to talk about. We receive the freedom to love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10) We have received the freedom to love simply because we have received the free love of God. The love of God is seen in him loving unloving man. How does he do it? He does it by sending his Son into the world to redeem us and take the wrath of God upon himself for us! Many speak in a very general way about the love of God. They may talk about his love in providing us food and other necessities. However, this general sort of love is not the love of God, for this verse tells us plainly wherein we can find his love. Yes! We are pointed to the God who sent his Son. We can never properly speak of God if we have no knowledge of him as the God who sent his Son. We can never believe in God the Father if we don't first believe in God the Son. The Son of God has given us knowledge of the Father and has showed us his love. We didn't love him, but since he loved us first, we came to know and believe the love he has for us. (1 John 4:7-21) This is where our love begins. The same passage of scriptures in 1 John says that perfect love casts out all fear. Love isn't made perfect where fear is because fear never allows us to trust or give ourselves completely. However, when we just believe Jesus, we are given the freedom of love. There is no more need to fear condemnation or being insufficient before the Lord. There is no more need to fear getting hurt or being betrayed by men. Our

faith in Jesus works by love and it is because we are granted the freedom and capability to love that we can willingly lay our lives down for one another. This is a topic that I would like to speak more about in Chapter Four. Love is the fruit of believing in Jesus and love exceeds all else.

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the greatness of the salvation that is given to us through faith in Jesus Christ. This salvation is available immediately for all who believe in him. Access to Jesus is free. Don't worry about where you are, what you did, or even about what you are doing right now. The Father of Jesus knows that you have no power. Thus, he sent Jesus into the world so that you might live by him. (John 6:57) Jesus is the only name you have to know or call upon. There is none else, and he is God. He is the true God and he is eternal life. (1 John 5:20) He is faithful and he will do exactly what he says, down to the very last letter. (Luke 21:33) He offers his salvation for free, here and now. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." It doesn't matter what you did. You don't have to repay anything, confess anything before men, or make any promises to the Lord. There are no conditions, pre or post. He takes all responsibility upon himself for your past, present, and future. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." I believe in him for my everything. He has been very faithful to me and he has done for me all of the things that I am writing about. If you are tired and burdened and need a Savior, believe in him right now, wherever you are. He is faithful to save you and give you an abundant life. (John 10:10)

If you already believe in Jesus, but are not partaking in the fullness of your inheritance in Jesus, then it is for you that I am especially writing. I plead with you to just receive the things I am writing about. There is no evil here, but there is much rest, goodness, and love. "Come unto [Jesus], all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and [he] will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It is my greatest desire that "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of

the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Test the things that I am writing about and judge for yourself whether they be good or evil. Be courageous and believe. There is no need to continue on in cowardessness, praying and waiting, praying and waiting. Don’t be a passive waiter, but rather, believe the Lord, for the Lord himself has clearly spoken unto you to “Believe!” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Amen!

Chapter Two: The New Life in Jesus Christ

The next two chapters in this book will focus on the new life in Christ. In Chapter One we talked about salvation and the obtaining of salvation. To be more precise, we saw that this salvation is most specifically presented to us through a promise of everlasting life for all those who believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus procured everlasting life for us on his cross. In other words, everlasting life is bought and paid for, and now he offers this life to us for free. He did all of the work, and we just believe him. In addition, we saw that the effects of obtaining everlasting life (the fullness of everlasting life actually being Jesus himself) are altogether freeing and glorious, full of power, rest, and love. Thus, having laid this foundation and having explained the treasures of the salvation given to us in Jesus, I would like to devote the rest of this book to looking at this wonderful salvation in even greater detail. At the time of believing in Jesus, we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Jesus Christ, and thereby, become a new creature. (1 Corinthians 12:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:17) We are, thus, raised from the dead and begin a new life. How does this new life come about and what does it look like? How should these new-born babes in Christ be raised? What should they be fed with? I will spend the rest of this chapter talking about the infancy of believers in Christ. Everything starts here. Raise a child well and he shall be well. Raise a child otherwise and he will be miserable.

In order to talk about the new life of a believer in Jesus Christ, I would like to talk about how this life comes about. To do this, it is necessary to say a couple of things that can offer help to people who haven't yet believed on Jesus as Savior, or perhaps have believed on Jesus, but feel that their faith is inferior or insufficient. I feel this is important and relevant to this chapter because belief in Jesus is the only essential and necessary element needed to be saved. Life begins the moment we believe in Jesus. To say it

another way, faith in Jesus is our moment of conception. Furthermore, Paul sets the stage for our entire life in Christ when he says in Colossians 2:6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." How did we receive Jesus? The simple answer is that we received Jesus by believing in him. (John 1:12, 1 John 5:1) So, the first thing I would like to say is to never let the excuse of having unbelief cause you to stumble or be offended. If you can't believe, believe anyway and he'll just accept you as you are. The sad thing is that many people end up getting advice which goes something like this: "You should keep reading your Bible and praying. Ask God to reveal himself to your heart and give you faith. I'll keep praying for you too." Thus, the gospel becomes "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that prays and waits and receives faith in me hath everlasting life." This is a shame indeed. However, we read in the 2 Corinthians 6:2, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Salvation is today. There is no need to pray and wait. Just believe and even if you think you can't believe, just believe anyway. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Don't make excuses and don't wait another second. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

The second thing that I would like to say is that believing on Jesus can in many ways be seen as an act of selfishness, at least in the eyes of the world. I say this because by believing in Jesus, we are actually putting our due blame, responsibility, and guilt on somebody else. In the world we live in, if I were to let somebody else take the blame for my wrong-doing, I would not only be seen as a selfish person, but I would also be seen as a coward. However, this is exactly what happens the moment we believe. "Here, Jesus, take it all. I throw all of my sins and responsibility and duties on you." When we say this, through our act of belief in him, he gladly replies "OK." The proof of this is the cross. He went gladly. Thus,

the Master and Lord of all becomes Servant of all. We don't serve him, but he serves us. We don't minister unto him, but he ministers unto us. If we see Jesus as a teacher who gives out everlasting life to his good pupils, we might cry out, "Lord, I will sell all, give to the poor, and follow you wherever you go." However, if we see him as Savior, we cry out, "Lord, you do everything for me. I have no legs to follow." The point of what I am trying to say is that when we believe in the Savior Jesus, we are actually doing that which is indeed selfish. Yet, doing that which is selfish is exactly what we have to do if we are to believe on him. We must get this into our head, for this is exactly what happens when someone believes on the Savior. The pride of man hates this, but so be it. "I believe you, Jesus! You are my Savior!" Jesus says to "Love your neighbor as yourself," but before you can love your neighbor, you first have to love yourself. At the time of salvation, all of the needs of my neighbor take a back seat to the needs of my own soul. So, even though it is true that many people need help and it is even more true that one should take responsibility for his own actions, forget all of that and forget everyone else — "Jesus! Help me! Save me!"

When we believe on Jesus and thereby receive him, Jesus actually ministers unto us and serves us and washes our feet. This is his joy and this is why he came to earth. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) This is the place we have to stay. This is abiding in him. So, though there be a lot of selfishness in believing on our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the way of our salvation and this is the will of the Lord.

Just to restate again (and I know I am being very repetitive), Paul sets the stage for our life in Christ when he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." It was by faith that we received him, and it didn't matter whether we thought our faith was great or not because the whole point of believing in Jesus is to just commit ourselves to him in child like

trust. In other words, whether you think your faith is great or small, it doesn't matter because the act of believing in the Savior Jesus can simply be thought to be a time when we throw up our hands and say something like "Here I am. I need you, but I have nothing to offer you. I don't have any great faith and I can't repent. I have no promises or resolutions for you. Just take me as I am. I commit my entire existence to you and my life is in your hands. I trust you with my past, present, and future. I believe you." We had nothing of value to give or offer when we received Jesus. Our entire existence had no value. However, we just believed the good news that God sent his Son to reconcile worthless people. He raises the dead and gives value to that which has no value.

Let's now look at what this new life in Jesus Christ looks like. New-born babes in Christ are those who have just had their eyes opened to the glory of Jesus Christ. They saw the Savior and realized that they needed him. They received and believed the good news of the gospel that "whosoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life." They believe that Jesus will do that which he promised and all of their trust and hope is in him. Their faith is pure and their joy is simple. They have found hope and relief for their souls. Their faces often shine like the sun and their eyes twinkle like the stars. They have been given new life and everybody who sees them says with astonishment, "Is that the same person?" They are in love with the Savior. He is the breath of their lives and they long for the day when they can be with him face to face.

However, just as a new born baby is frail and delicate, these too are fragile. The slightest wind is able to blow them off course. (Ephesians 4:14) Some of these babes may be tempted to doubt, while others may be targeted for deception by false teachers and phony ministers of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) Whatever the case may be, however, these little ones who believe in Jesus are kept and can never perish.

Another characteristic that distinguishes these little ones is

that they are greatly loved by the Father. Their value is worth more than all of the nations of the earth and it would be easier for every living being on earth to disappear and give up the ghost than it would be for one of these babes to perish. (Matthew 18:14) Let's be careful to never offend them, for their angels do always behold the face of the Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:10) These little ones are the priority of Jesus Christ and all of his thoughts are toward them. It is mainly for these little ones that church leaders, elders, pastors, and teachers exist. Jesus would much rather see every man on the face of the earth drop into hell than see harm done to one of these babes in Christ. (Matthew 18:6) They are dear to him and the apple of his eye. They are loved above all else and the sword of the Almighty God will drop upon all who despise, abuse, belittle, or snub them.

In the world, babies grow up into adolescence and eventually adulthood. This should be the case with believers in Jesus Christ too. However, we learn in the Bible that this is often not the case. (Hebrews 5:12-14, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, and Ephesians 4:14) Some people can go on as baby Christians for many many years and hardly grow at all. Just as a baby in the world cannot grow up to be strong without proper care and child-raising, neither can these grow up without proper oversight and education. The church, besides worshipping, praising, and giving thanks to the King of kings, is involved in a lot of activities such as Bible studies, prayer, small group meetings, local outreach and evangelism, ministry to the poor, world-wide missions support, and various social activities. However, among these activities, the care and concern of these babes in Christ, namely the young and weak in the church, should be top priority.

I mention all of these things because I want to assure you that if you believe in Jesus, you are greatly loved regardless of what your life looks like or how you feel or what others may think about you. Your soul is of greater value to God than the whole world itself. The purpose of the rest of this book is to show you

how you are to abide in Jesus Christ.

I would like to continue now by answering the other two questions proposed in the beginning of this chapter. What should these new-born babes in Christ be fed with and how should they be raised?

To put it simply, babes in Christ should be fed with the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. This may sound obvious, but the sad thing is that many new-born babes are starving to death.

In order to try to make as clear as possible what I am saying, I would like to give you an example. Now, I know that people go through so many different experiences that this example probably won't apply to most people. Therefore, I don't want to focus on the circumstances or experiences of the person in this hypothetical story, but I would like us to focus on the heart of his problem. I believe that his problem is actually what is troubling many people today:

A young man senses emptiness in his life and seeks to fill that emptiness by seeking the true meaning of life. By one way or another he finds himself in a church and hears a message on Jesus and his cross. He believes in Jesus and is assured of having forgiveness of sins and a new life. Everything is great, but then something happens. He finds out that Christians just don't spend their days daydreaming about their Savior, but rather, are committed to a life of service to him. He is taught that this all starts with a church-based Bible study, and afterward, "if he wants to follow through with the Lord," should get baptized in water. The young believer then senses that going through the Bible studies and baptism is sort of like an initiation process into the church. Finally, after weeks of study, the day of his water baptism arrives and he is officially welcomed into the church. Everything seems great as he sets out on his new life in Christ. He attends church regularly, tithes, attends small group, and enjoys fellowshiping with other Christians. However, he soon finds a sense of emptiness returning to his heart. He feels confused about

the root of his depression and dissatisfaction. He thinks that maybe it is because of sin. He can't find total freedom from sin. Also, he is perplexed about what exactly the will of the Lord is for his life. He isn't even sure about what would bring him happiness. He consults some friends, reads some books, and talks to the pastor once or twice. He is told that there is no complete freedom from sin in this world and he is encouraged to wait on the Lord. "Keep praying and be patient. Try to read your Bible more and seek the will of the Lord for your life." Finally, after weeks of feeling lost, he "receives" some enlightenment on the purpose of his life as a Christian. He learns that Christians live to "go into all nations and make disciples." He resolves to concentrate more on the things of Christ, repent afresh, and actively pursue local outreach. He feels a sense of relief and peace in his heart. It's just like starting all over again. And so he lives for a few months...

The young man in the story above has started out on what is the beginning of a cycle of ups and downs. He will, in fact, find no freedom. Rather, I say that if he were to find freedom living the way this story ends, he would be deceived and all the more lost. In the story, the young man seeks the will of the Lord, makes promises, repents afresh, and pursues a life of purpose found in evangelistic activities. After doing all of these things, he finally feels relieved and a sense of peace. Yes, it is as if he is starting all over again. However, he is greatly deceiving himself. Why would I say such a thing? I say such a thing because this young man has "left his first love," which was Jesus himself. How did this young man actually start out? He simply believed the Gospel and had joy in believing. Whom did he believe in? He believed in Jesus and he believed that Jesus was faithful to do the things he said he would do, namely, forgive his sins and give him freedom and everlasting life. Through believing in Jesus, the young man had joy, peace, and relief. He had a natural holiness and his face shined. However, as soon as he made the transition from "Jesus" to "the things Christians are supposed to do" he walked away from Savior. He

believed, but he gave in under temptation. (Luke 8:13) His temptation began the moment he was offered the Bible studies and water baptism. (Neither study nor outward ceremony is required for salvation. Sadly, it is often these very things that hinder salvation because they introduce the danger of turning the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ into vain religious works. Many a time, instead of just being given the freeing message of the cross of Jesus Christ, people are offered a mixture of the Savior Jesus and “the things that Christians do if they really want to follow through with the Lord.” This mixture is deadly and evil. Therefore, we must maintain the simplicity of God’s salvation message. We just hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe the good news that God in Jesus has done everything for us. Jesus is the one who died for us and rose again. He did it all!) Continuing on, the young man in the story above should have been encouraged to get to know the love of Jesus more. He should have been taught to rest in his Savior and to enjoy his Savior. However, he was not. Instead, he went through the standard operating procedures of so many churches, namely, get people to make a decision to believe in Jesus and then get them so busy doing other things that they forget about their Savior altogether. He was Savior through and through, but in a flash, he became Teacher first and Savior second. As a result, he was deceived and walked away from his Savior.

The young man in the story should have “abided” in Jesus. Jesus is where life begins and Jesus is where life continues. Jesus states, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:4) Abiding in Jesus means believing in him. All those who believe in Jesus bear the fruits of love and enjoy the gifts of the Spirit naturally. However, Jesus also warns that “if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:6) Abiding in Jesus is vitally important. We are

not abiding in Jesus, if after we believe in Jesus, we start to emphasize or pursue someone or something else. As a result of not abiding in Jesus many feel lost, have depression, are up and down, are trapped in sin, and just feel sick. Like the young man in the story, they are withering. True peace is found in believing in Jesus. This is where we Christians start and this is where we have to stay.

So often church activities and “the things that Christians do” distract believers from the only thing that is needful, Jesus Christ himself. (Luke 10:38-42) Not only this, but add in the cares of the world and soon enough these babes in Christ are suffering from overwhelming pressure on all sides. Some suddenly stop coming to church while others bounce from church to church. Still yet, others lose their joy and some get so carried away in activities and passions that they can go on for years and not even know that they are deceived. These young ones need to be continually fed with the Jesus they received at the *moment of their salvation. Church activities and worldly pressures didn't matter at that moment. The only thing that mattered was the Savior who was to save their souls. Believers need to live their whole lives in the moment of their salvation. This was when it was just them and their Savior. If they do this, they will see Jesus and they will bear fruit naturally. If babes in Christ do not reject temptations and compulsions to depart from the Savior, they will most certainly live their lives in failure and sin. They will spend their days in a state of wandering or as those who have been deceived by a form of religion or some other thing.

Finally, let's look at the question of how these babes in Christ should be raised. The simple answer to this question is that they should be raised to know the Savior Jesus Christ more and more so that they become established and unshakeable in him. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” If a man possesses everlasting life, he lacks nothing and there is nothing for him to seek after to acquire. As I stated before, everlasting life is Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20) and we experience

everlasting life by knowing Jesus and the Father who sent him. (John 17:3) Furthermore, the Father sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save it, so these little ones should not be raised to know the Teacher Jesus who puts on them a heavy yoke as Moses did, but they should be raised to know the Savior Jesus whose yoke is light and whose commandments are not grievous. (John 3:17, Matthew 11:28-30, and 1 John 5:3) Many believers are encouraged, either directly or indirectly, to get involved in activities as soon as possible. Although the intentions of this encouragement may be well placed, it is wrong to do this. The reason this is wrong is because many believers come to believe that these activities are actually the substance of Christian living. The Christian life then becomes all about doing something or living a certain way, and thus, Christianity becomes nothing more than common religion. However, Christianity is all about Jesus Christ. He is the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega. So, knowing this, it makes no sense at all to tell these little ones that salvation and life are obtained by faith alone in Christ alone, but then have them chasing after activities and other things the moment a confession of faith comes out of their mouths. We should be dedicated to helping these little ones become completely established in their Savior and his free love and salvation. If we do this, they will bear fruit unto God naturally. However, the fact remains that there are many people who have spent many years in church and sadly have no idea what the Gospel is and what the Gospel means. Their lives have been reduced to religious observances and “doing good.” Many of these people sincerely think that they are pleasing God, but the only thing that pleases God is faith in Jesus Christ that works by love. This love begins with the restoration and comfort of their own souls as they grow in the knowledge of the Son of God and in the power of his salvation. Babies in Christ first have to be ministered to before they can minister unto others. They have to become established in the love of Jesus before they can proclaim the love of Jesus. They have to

learn how to rest before they can give rest to others.

*I realize that many people may not remember the exact “moment” of their salvation. This is okay, for Jesus said, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Thus, if you believe on the Savior, you are saved regardless of whether or not you remember the exact moment of your salvation.

Chapter Three: The Firstfruits of Living in Christ The Restoration and Nurture of Your Own Soul

As the title of this chapter suggests, the entire content of this chapter can be summed up in saying that the firstfruits of living in Jesus are simply the restoration and nurture of your own soul. Let me ask you a question: How can a person love if he's never experienced or seen love? The simple answer is that he can't. Or how can a person show others the joy of Jesus if he's never experienced the joy in his own life? Can a man teach others the rest and power of Jesus Christ if he's never rested or lived with the power himself? Obviously not. The same goes for us. Until our own souls are restored and comforted, we can in no way restore or comfort the souls of others. Thus, new believers in Jesus Christ need to first and foremost thoroughly experience the restoration of their own souls in rest, assurance, joy, love, freedom, power, and righteousness. In other words, we have to rest, gain strength, and grow up healthy before we can work. Nothing is expected of babes in Jesus Christ just as nothing is expected of babies in this world. Babes in Christ are to rest and enjoy their childhood, get a good education in the salvation of Jesus Christ and grow up healthy, strong, and wise. If they do this they will be well equipped and able to instruct in word and deed the believers who are to follow them.

Everybody wants to bear fruit for the Lord, but just as a seed can't bear fruit before it grows into a tree or some other plant, neither can we bear fruit before we grow up. Just as a seed needs plenty of sun, water, and nutrients from the earth, we believers need plenty of sun, water, and nutrients from our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus sums this up when he says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

(John 15:4-5) Thus, it is through Jesus that we live and breathe and have our being. He makes us who we are and he is the one who works in us to bear fruit. In other words, fruit doesn't come from our own efforts and activities regardless of how sincere they may be. "But I want to work for the Lord," one might say. At first, this might seem like an appropriate and honorable desire, but young believers first have to learn that before they can minister unto the Lord and work for him, they have to let the Lord minister unto them. (John 13:4-8) Notice that Jesus says that fruit comes from "abiding" in him. I like this word "abiding" because it means that we are to stay in the Lord Jesus. We are not to run around looking for ways to make him happy, but we are to rest in him and let him work: "For without me ye can do nothing." He works through us, but before he can work through us, he needs to restore us. As I mentioned in Chapter One, when a person believes in the Savior Jesus, he is in fact set free from sin and made perfect. His entire life becomes a transition from one glorious state to another glorious state of goodness. This goodness begins with the restoration of his own soul. Thus, we as the branches partake in Jesus' goodness and change from good to good as we abide in him. In other words, we are changed into his image as we partake in his goodness. As he is good, so are we. (1 John 4:17) We live as Jesus lives. To say it again, we are changed into his image.

Now, if there be anybody in doubt of these things, I would like you to consider the following question: How did Jesus live before he carried out his calling of Savior of the world? I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Jesus spent the first 30 years of his life as a normal person working a normal job. He spent 30 years learning the goodness of the Father before he spent three and a half years preaching the gospel, healing the sick and oppressed, and dying for the sins of the world. In other words, even though Jesus was born Son of God and holy and perfect, he spent 30 years of his life growing in the grace, wisdom, and strength of his Father. It is the same for us. Before we can work

for Jesus, we must learn from him and receive his rest. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-30) I like what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:6. “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.” In other words, workers need to personally partake in the goodness of the fruits themselves before they can be of any use in administering the fruits to others. Paul states in Galatians 5:22-23 that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It is through experiencing these fruits first in our own lives that we can make them manifest to others.

I would like to spend the rest of this chapter talking more specifically about the firstfruits of believing in Jesus Christ. I believe that all of the fruits of believing in Jesus are related and connected in that they all come out of the same source, which is Jesus Christ and his gospel. Therefore, I might be very repetitive at times, but I believe this is okay and needful. The firstfruits that I will be talking about specifically are the fruits of resting, learning and becoming established in the Gospel, and personally experiencing Jesus' love, goodness, and joy. In addition to these, I will also be talking about the fruit of realizing the purpose of our lives as Christians.

Before moving on in our discussion, however, I would like to make one very important clarification that requires our complete attention and understanding. What I would like to clarify is that which I mentioned above, namely, that all fruits flow out of the same source, which is Jesus and his gospel. Realizing this truth opens our eyes to the fact that we actually do not need to focus on the fruits at all. Rather, we should give all attention to the source of the fruits. When our eyes are on Jesus, the goodness of Jesus and the fruits of his salvation flow out of our hearts freely and naturally. Nothing is needed other than faith in Jesus Christ. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Faith in Jesus is very practical. Yes, faith is

practical for living! We need nothing else. Fruits are just the result of believing; thus, it is purely academic discussion to talk about the fruits themselves. In other words, fruits are the natural consequence of believing on the Savior. We should never attempt to bear our own fruit. As Jesus said, “Without me you can do nothing.” So, please always keep in mind that “belief in Jesus” equals an abundance of fruit. Jesus works in us to bear the fruits that he wants. He makes and shapes us according to his will to accomplish his own glorious purpose for his body. Thus, as a body has many parts, so are we. Believers in Jesus often look and live very differently. What we have in common, however, is that we all believe in Jesus and love him and his body, which is the church. To sum up, our entire focus must always be on Jesus. With this in mind, I realize that I run the risk of causing some to stumble by writing about the fruits of believing (I fear that some will take their focus off of Jesus and put it on the fruits of believing.) However, in order to provide believers with some solid encouragement, guidance, and teaching about what the Christian life looks like in general, I think it is right and important to write in detail about the fruits of Jesus' salvation. Therefore, the remainder of this book will continue to deal in particular with our life in Christ.

To start, I would like to mention a few things about the concept of rest. Rest implies that there is no obligation of work charged or assigned to any of those who believe in Jesus. This means that believers in Jesus need not even lift a finger if they so choose. This also means that there is no obligation or duty to get involved in church activities or programs. This privilege of resting gives believers the freedom to do as they want. Understanding this right of ours in Jesus is a great relief to many who are wearied and heavy laden. It is also a great encouragement to the greatest gift of the Spirit, which is love. Love can never be made perfect where there is law and obligation because where there is law and obligation, there is fear. (Romans 4:15 and 1 John 4:18)

Now I know at this point that there are probably a few persons who are offended by this concept of rest. My response is simply that this is what the Bible teaches. Believers in Jesus are saved without any consideration being given to works. (John 6:47, Romans 3:28, and Romans 4:5-6) This is the grace of God. (Romans 4:4) In order to make my point clear, however, let me just say that I have stated that we have the freedom to rest, not the obligation to be lazy. Having the freedom to rest does not imply that we will spend our whole lives doing nothing. Quite to the contrary, all those who believe in Jesus, and thus take part in his rest, will bear an abundance of fruit unto God the Father. The fruit that believers bear is borne naturally. It is borne from the goodness of their hearts and not out of fear of being whipped or out of zeal of receiving rewards.

Experiencing this spiritual rest helps our bodies, minds, and souls to heal. Moreover, rest helps to restore us to a state of calmness and it gives us the opportunity to focus our attention on our Savior Jesus without having to worry about anything else. For example, if we were to see Jesus as a teacher, our whole desire would be to be found acceptable and righteous before him. As a result of this, we would never be able to focus on him with hearts of adoration, for we would be working for him in order to receive his acceptance and rewards. In such a case, we wouldn't be able to rest or receive his free grace and love. However, when we see him as 100% Savior, then we can enter into his free rest, and it is through this that we can without fear and distraction attend unto his adoration and praise while receiving and experiencing the fullness of his salvation presented to us in the Gospel.

This brings me to the next firstfruit that I want to mention, namely, learning and personally becoming established in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To clarify, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the proclamation of the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scripture. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) This

salvation is imputed to all persons who simply believe the message. (Ephesians 1:13-14 and John 6:47) Learning and becoming established in the Gospel is something that we grow in over our whole lives, but at the same time, a certain fundamental knowledge of the Gospel is needed so that we be not “carried to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” that blows our way. (Ephesians 4:14) Also, learning and becoming established in the Gospel is something that should be quite desirable to us. This is because the Gospel is the message of our salvation and in it we find the riches of our inheritance. As we read in John 6:47, this salvation is not only something we can enjoy in the next life, but it is something that is real, practical, and enjoyable for this life too. As it is written in Romans 1:16, “[the Gospel of Christ] is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Thus, the Gospel of Jesus possesses the power to set you free from your sins and from all of your enemies so that you can serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life. (Luke 1:74-75) Jesus came so that we could have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10) The power of this abundant life is found in him through believing his words, which he spoke to us through his Gospel. Therefore, learning and becoming established in the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be top priority for believers in Jesus. The reason I didn't mention this first was because of the sad tendency that exists today, namely, that of burdening babes in Christ with activities and ceremonies the moment a confession of faith leaves their lips. They need to learn and become established in the Gospel, but the sad truth is that they often don't have the time because they are too busy doing and learning other things. Some don't even realize the need and the benefit of learning the Gospel. Therefore, it is for these reasons that I mentioned the firstfruit of resting first.

I spoke in detail about some of the major effects of believing in Jesus in the second half of Chapter One. (pages 8-21) The salvation of Jesus is presented to us in the form of a promise,

sealed with his very own blood at the cross. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” The benefits that I mentioned included coming into a relationship of peace, love, dependency, and friendship with Jesus as well as experiencing the power, perfection, and freedom of the sons of God. It would be well worth it to re-read those pages again to refresh your mind and spirit in the greatness of the Gospel given unto us. These truths in Jesus Christ are very important elements of our education as Christians. Truth sets free and learning the riches of Jesus will empower us to live a life of joy, love, righteousness, and power. (John 8:32)

Another firstfruit that is very much related to learning and becoming established in the Gospel is the experiencing of Jesus' love, goodness, and joy. Oh, there is no explaining how vital this is to the restoration and prosperity of the soul! Let me just say that the more we learn about and experience Jesus' love toward us, the more wonderful and abundant our lives are, filled with compassion, gentleness, and goodness. It is through the love of Jesus that love blossoms in our own hearts and we become a great consolation unto others.

I venture to say that there are many people who have believed on Jesus, but still don't really know the love of Jesus. They know Jesus mainly as a strict and demanding Master who breathes out threats of damnation and only offers eternal life to a select few who are able to keep his rules well enough. These types of people hear about Jesus, but it is not the Savior Jesus who saves people for free out of the goodness of his heart. Instead it is a half-savior Jesus who offers to save people if they are good enough disciples. Thus, these types of people don't live their lives from faith to faith, but from repentance to repentance. (Their confessions and repentance never end.) These types of people don't live their lives from glory to glory, but from fear to fear. Let me just say that if you see Jesus in this way, you are not experiencing the love of God. While it is true that our God is a consuming fire and that his

name and vengeance are dreadful above all else, it is also true that he is a God of grace and love who sent Jesus into the world, not to judge the world, but to save it. I say to you that if you want to be saved and experience everlasting life, you must believe in the Savior Jesus. Jesus Christ is the expression of God's love and we are to receive this love. We read in 1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Also, we read in 1 John 4:8-10 "...For God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In addition, John 3:16 is a familiar and wonderful verse: "For God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As I mentioned just above, this is the message that we are to receive and believe. We must become fully acquainted with the love of God toward our souls. John goes on to write in John 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." So, this is why I say that receiving Jesus' love and goodness is a firstfruit of believing on him. We must learn thoroughly that he is a God of love and that his thoughts toward us are not judgmental, but full of compassion, grace, mercy, and goodness. We must learn that goodness and mercy shall follow us all of the days of our lives. We must learn that it is his goodness that leads us to true repentance. (Romans 2:4) This is part of our inheritance from the Lord God. When we don't believe the love that God has toward us, we will always live in fear and bondage. However, when we know and believe his love toward us, we are set free and perfect love casts out all fear. It is through knowing the love of God in Jesus Christ that we learn how to love and become perfect in love. (1 John 4:18) Before young believers attempt to do anything else, they must be established in this truth of Jesus' love toward them. When believers are established in this truth everyday is wonderful and

brilliant and fantastic. Every day is an outpouring of goodness and joy. Regardless of how hard the labors, pains, and struggles in this world may be, it is well with their souls. They are grounded and settled in peace. Their heartsong goes “Oh, Jesus, my love. You are my greatest thought and thoughts of you are the pleasure of my day. Oh, how sweet it is to dwell in your love!”

I believe that Jesus' joy is connected to his love. When we know and believe the love he has for us, we often can't help but feel an overflowing sense of joy, praise, and thanksgiving. Abiding in the joy of Jesus and his salvation is very important for us as we live in this world. This world is evil and the Bible teaches that we believers battle with the powers of darkness while we live here. (Galatians 1:4 and Ephesians 6:12) Thus, there are many forces against our souls that would like to rob us of our joy and our inheritance in Jesus. However, Jesus has given us everlasting life, so we certainly have power over all enemies, regardless of whom they may be. We have to go on in full faith believing that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (Romans 8:37) I believe that one good way to stay in the joy of Jesus is to always keep in mind the glory that is to follow. Personally, I just love daydreaming about Jesus and the glories that are in heaven. I like thinking about what he is doing now and what those who have already passed into glory are doing. No doubt that they are singing his praises and rejoicing in their God! I love thinking about the fact that I will be there soon with all other believers. I love daydreaming about the gathering of all saints in glory. I love daydreaming about seeing him face to face. In other words, it is good to keep one's mind on the things to come and not on the things of this world, which are about to pass away. There is no denying that the problems in this world are real and troubling, but we must not be overwhelmed by them. Paul writes about this when he says, “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus...for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed

day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:14-18)

I'd like to relate a story I once heard from a brother in Christ. He was telling a story about a funeral he attended for a dear Christian friend. At the time of the man's funeral, all the believers in attendance were rejoicing in God for his goodness. Among those in attendance was a man who was not familiar with Christian funerals. He was shocked to see the joy on people's faces even though they were attending the funeral of a dear friend. This man asked the brother to explain the reason for everyone's joy because he just couldn't figure it out. The brother responded that while everyone was not happy by the death of their friend, they were filled with the joy of Jesus knowing that one day they would be reunited with their friend in heaven in the presence of Jesus and all other believers. The brother's point was that in this life there are times when we are not happy, but our joy in Jesus transcends all things. We see eternal things, so temporal things, no matter how bad they may be, cannot extinguish the joy and the power we have in Jesus. Yes! We have Jesus and we are in Jesus! We overcome all things! Let's keep this joy with us at all times!

Finally, I would like to speak about the firstfruit of realizing the purpose of our lives as Christians. We can never underestimate the importance of this realization simply for the reason that there is so much misunderstanding about what the purpose of the Christian life is. In 1 John 3:23, we read, “And this is [God's] commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” This is the sum of the Christian life. It is this simple. This is a message for children and only children can receive it. Hallelujah! We are to believe in Jesus and love one another. That's all!

As I wrote in Chapter Two, we are to continue in the simple

faith that we had the moment we believed in Jesus. Paul makes reference to this when he says, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” John also mentions this at the end of his first letter when he tells believers in Jesus Christ his purpose for writing to them: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13) He makes it clear that everyone who believes on Jesus has eternal life and should continue to believe on him. Thus, it is not as if we believe on Jesus for salvation, but then move on, as if it were, beyond faith. There is nothing beyond faith in Jesus. We live and breathe and have our being in him. We take him at his word and trust that he is living in us and working in us to make us a wonderful body of believers.

Next, as believers in Jesus, we are to love each other. As I mentioned before, this is not something that we are to try really hard to do, but it is something that naturally comes out of our hearts through the workings of the Spirit as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, all who believe in Jesus bear the fruit of love naturally. He is the vine and we are the branches. He works through us to bear this most lovely and precious fruit. Love is the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit. Love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10) In addition, we read that in Jesus Christ nothing matters except for faith which works by love. (Galatians 5:6)

We live in a day when many people would have you believe that the purpose of the Christian life is summed up in preaching the Gospel to the unsaved world. This is a mistake, however. There can be no doubt about the importance of missions work, evangelism, and preaching the Gospel to the lost, but this is not the purpose of our lives. Preaching the Gospel to the lost is just one of the fruits of the love that comes from faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, if we believe in Jesus and love one another, the unsaved world will come to know about Jesus. Jesus made reference to this

very same thing when he said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35) He made a similar conclusion in his prayer to the Father when he said: “That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 17:21) The will of God is that we believers love one another. Believers loving fellow believers. That is all. Nothing too grand. Nothing too hard. (1 John 5:3) If we believers love one another, we will truly become one and perfect, and unbelievers will come to know that the Father sent Jesus into the world. (John 17:23)

The conclusion of it all is that “we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” However, before we can begin to keep this commandment, we have to fully realize that it is indeed the purpose of our lives as Christians. We must throw off every temptation to complicate the Christian life. Methods, systems, activities, and so on must never be made to replace the simplicity and the greatness of God's purpose for our lives as Christians. If we believe in Jesus, everything else and everything big will come naturally. We have to believe this.

In this chapter we looked at the firstfruits of believing in Jesus. The firstfruits of the Christian life are truly the restoring and nurturing of one's own soul. Just as children eventually grow up to become adults, so do babes in Christ. (1 John 2:12-14) However, if babes in Christ are not fed and raised properly, they will never grow up at all. I pray that this chapter has been able to comfort and establish some young ones. The whole of this chapter and the previous one can be thought to be a sort of introduction to the Christian life. In the next two chapters, we will be examining the Christian life in even greater detail. In Chapter Four, we will continue to look at the Christian life from the point of view of individual believers. We will do this in light of 1 John 3:23, quoted above. In Chapter Five, we will conclude this book by looking at

God's general and grand purpose for the body of Jesus Christ, the church.

Chapter Four: Faith in Jesus that Works by Love

In the last chapter we saw that the purpose of our Christian life is summed up in 1 John 3:23: “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” After we come into the realization of this, it is like a heavy weight is taken off of our shoulders. God's commandments are not grievous, but rather easy to bear and full of goodness and consolation. (Matthew 11:28-30 and 1 John 5:3) Knowing this should, therefore, clear the path for believers in Jesus Christ to bear fruit unto their Savior.

As we already established, all the fruits of love are borne out of faith toward Jesus Christ as Jesus lives and works within us. This is the meaning of Galatians 5:6: “For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” In the New Testament, receiving circumcision is often representative of putting oneself under the law of Moses as a way of life. In this verse in Galatians, however, Paul is saying that it is worthless to receive circumcision, for “circumcision avails nothing.” In other words, trying to keep the law of Moses will profit you nothing. Likewise, not receiving circumcision will also profit you nothing. “Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision.” Thus, systems that stress the need to live freely without law are also worthless. So, how can this be? The reason for this is that the only thing that really matters in Jesus Christ is faith in him which works by love. I have often noticed a tendency among Christians to either stress some concept of law or grace. In other words, some stress the necessity to keep God's laws while others stress the necessity to live in the fullness of freedom through grace. Paul, however, in this verse in Galatians is saying that neither matter. It doesn't matter how well you follow after the law of God, for the only thing that matters in Jesus is faith that works by love. Likewise, it doesn't matter how well you are established in your freedom through the doctrine of grace, for

the only thing that matters in Jesus is faith that works by love. (As a side note, the only grace that really matters is the grace of God of sending Jesus into the world to redeem worthless sinners. We are saved by grace. Salvation is a complete act of mercy on the part of God).

Love in Jesus Christ our God is the only thing that matters for Christians. As I mentioned above and in the proceeding chapter, the realization of this is a real relief to our souls. There is no longer any necessity to keep pondering what the will of the Lord is for our lives. His heart is really simple. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:35) In this chapter, I intend to show that faith which works by love is the branch in Jesus Christ that bears much fruit. Faith that works by love is the way of the Christian life.

As we proceed in this chapter, it is my hope to draw a distinction between that which pleases God, namely, love in Jesus Christ, and that which doesn't please God, namely, everything else. It is my hope that through looking at a few key passages of scripture, the superiority of love will become evident to every eye.

To start, I would like us to briefly look at two of the more shocking passages in the New Testament. Through these passages, I intend to show that religious activities, zeal, and success are not the things that please Jesus.

The first passage I would like to look at is found in Matthew 7:21-23. In this passage we hear some very fearful words from the Lord Jesus. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” I say that this is a very fearful portion of Scripture simply for the fact that Jesus says that “many”

supposed “disciples of Jesus Christ” will be cast away as reprobate sinners. How can these things be? The people in these verses are to all appearance the perfect disciples. They prophesied, cast out devils, and did many wonderful works all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Who would dare to say that these men were not Christian? To the eyes of men they showed themselves to be great servants of the Lord in word and deed. These people probably held high positions in leadership. They probably instructed many and were probably held in esteem by all who saw and heard them. However, the Lord Jesus Christ didn't know them. To the Lord Jesus Christ, they were just workers of iniquity.

The second passage of scripture is Matthew 5:20. In this verse, we read that Jesus tells his disciples “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20) The scribes and the Pharisees were very religious people who were zealous for the law of God and followed hard after good works, the knowledge of God, evangelism, and many other religious observances. In their own eyes they followed after that which was true and tried their best to live righteously. In their own eyes and probably in the eyes of most of the common people, they were the perfect disciples of God. Jesus, however, declared them to be hypocrites and warns us that if our righteousness doesn't exceed theirs, we won't in any way enter into the kingdom of heaven.

So again, just what exactly does Jesus want? In other words, if prophecy, exorcisms, wonderful works, sacrifices, prayers, Bible study, law-keeping, and evangelism are not the things he desires from us, what more can we do? The people named in these verses are the elite of the elite when it comes to “being spiritual.” If their fruit wasn't accepted unto the Lord, what fruit is acceptable? Well, I know that I don't even have to ask these questions, for we already know the answers to them. I just ask them because repetition is often a good way to help us remember and see the

importance of things. So, just what is the will of the Lord for us? “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” (1 John 3:23) Jesus Christ is not interested in you becoming a great Christian. He isn't interested in whether you succeed or fail in your dreams and goals and visions. The only thing that matters to Jesus Christ is your heart. All those who believe in Jesus Christ shall be saved and shall bear the fruit of mutual love for one another. As Christians, Jesus is mainly interested in us loving the people who are closest to us, namely, those who sit in the same church pews with us. Yes, Jesus is more interested in us loving and receiving the love of the people who sit next to us in church than he is in us feeding the poor or preaching the gospel to the lost. Personally, I was shocked when I came to the realization of this. However, this should be the most obvious thing in the world, for it is written in the New Testament over and over again that the disciples of Jesus Christ are to love and care and minister unto one another. (Luke 22:24-26, John 13:13-17 and John 13:34-35)

I would now like us to take a look at one of Jesus' familiar parables. It is found in Matthew 25:31-46. I believe that this parable does much to show us very clearly the heart of Jesus Christ. The glorious thing is that for us believers, Jesus lives in our hearts to bear the good fruit of the good people found in this parable.

Matthew 25:31-46 is a very long portion of scripture, but I want to quote it at length just to make sure that everyone has the chance to read it. I know that this parable is familiar to most people, and thus, I know that many people will probably just skim it over. That is fine. I do, however, request that special attention be given to verses 31-32, 37, 40, 44-45.

“31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

To ask the question again, what is the will of the Lord? Many ponder this for hours and hours and spend a great deal of time in prayer trying to discern the will of the Lord for them. Should I do this or that? Should I turn to the right or to the left? Maybe the Lord’s will is that I pray more. Maybe it’s that I should read the

Bible more. Maybe I should join the choir or start attending a small group. Perhaps I need to pray and wait and receive a special anointing from the Lord. Or perhaps I should tithe more. Maybe the Lord's will is that I get into the ministry. Maybe I should get involved in outreach and evangelism. Maybe I just need to love people more. The shocking truth is, however, that the will of the Lord is none of the above. So, just what is he thinking about and what is his standard of judgment when he comes back as King and Judge of the world? (verses 31-32) Well, Jesus tells us plainly what the will of the Lord is in verse 40: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Jesus' heart is solely toward the least of his brethren. The least of Jesus' brethren are, namely, the weak among us in our churches. They are people who believe in Jesus, but are powerless, poor, lost, naked, sick, and outcast. (verses 35-36) Take the time to read these verses carefully, for there is no other standard of judgment. Jesus only wants to know if you loved the least of his brethren. In proof of this view, I'd like us to take a look at one more passage. We read in Luke 9:46-48: "Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." In other words, whoever receives the least of Jesus' brethren is the greatest in the eyes of Jesus. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Jesus is interested in us loving one another, and who needs love and compassion more than the least of Jesus' brethren? This is exactly what is meant when Paul says "And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant

comeliness...That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1 Corinthians 14:24-27) As the body of Jesus Christ, we are to love one another, and in particular, the strong in the body are to take care of the weak. (Romans 15:1 and Galatians 6:2)

Jesus’ heart is completely toward Christians loving other Christians. His heart is that we become one in him. (John 17:21) It should be obvious to us that if we Christians can’t love one another, then we can’t love anyone else. If we can’t love those who are closest to us, how can we love those who are far away? How can we even begin to think about world missions, when there is so much pain right where we are? First, let the body be healed and everything else will follow naturally. Jesus himself said in John 17:9, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” In other words, Jesus’ desire is toward his people. Jesus favors believers over unbelievers. Jesus favors the least before the greatest. He favors the weak Christian over the strong. The job of us Christians is to be focused on the perfection of the body of Christ, and if there be any strong among us, let the strong take care of the weak.

Jesus said in another familiar passage, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13) Let me just that in order to lay one’s life down for someone there has to be a really good reason to do it. In other words, people don’t lay their lives down for someone else unless it is a life or death scenario. There has to be a need in order to fulfill this commandment. The need is found in needy Christians. These are the people right among us where we live. They are in our church pews and they are in our families. Jesus says that we are to lay our lives down for our friends. Friends are people that are close to us. They are not strangers and people we never met before. We really have to realize these things,

and we will realize them as we grow in the knowledge of our Savior. Our Savior gave each of us a personal promise: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47) As we grow in the knowledge of this man who has laid down his life us, we will naturally and automatically grow his love. We will naturally grow in the love that is willing to throw away everything for a friend in need. This is our confidence because this is what he promised us when he promised us everlasting life.

The interesting thing about the parable told in Matthew 25:31-46 is that the righteous seem to be just normal people who weren't even aware of their righteousness. “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” In other words, their good works were natural. They didn't set out with big plans or big dreams. They did that which was right, namely, love those who were closest to them. Let me just say again, if there be any who seem to be strong among us, let them take a look around the pews in their own churches. I am sure they will find some in need. They will find those who are weak and suffering. Maybe there are some who are struggling in their faith and need some encouragement. Some may just need a friend. Others might need some money or some other help. (With this said, however, the even greater truth may be that many of us who are reading this book are the ones who need help. It is my heart's prayer that the Lord Jesus our Savior would look upon us with his great heart of mercy and send us some help.)

On the other hand, just as the righteous were unaware of their righteousness, the unrighteous were equally unaware of their unrighteousness. The unrighteous answer and say to Jesus in verse 44 “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?” In

other words, they didn't realize they did anything wrong. The one thing that all of the unrighteous have in common is that they have no interest in the least of Jesus' brethren. It doesn't matter how well they might have lived or what they might have accomplished. Jesus' standard is plain and clear. "What did you do for the least of my brethren?"

In closing, I would just like us to look again at God's purpose for our Christian lives. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (1 John 3:23) That is all that God desires from us and it surpasses everything else. Yes, this purpose of God for us, his church, surpasses all other purposes, dreams, and visions regardless of how big and grand they may be. Believe in Jesus and you are perfect. Believe in Jesus and you will bear the fruit of love. The purpose of God for us in Jesus Christ is bigger and greater than we can ever imagine. To most people it might be boring and foolishness to "just believe and love one another," but this is the heart of Jesus. Though we be surrounded by men who seek after better methods, visions, dreams, and many other things, let's not compromise the heart of Jesus Christ. His gospel is simple: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47) And his heart is simple: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)

Chapter Five: Beholding the Glory of Jesus

In this last chapter, I would like to take a look at God's general and grand purpose for the body of Jesus Christ, the church. I believe that his purpose for us is summed up in John 17:20-24. In these verses Jesus prays to the Father, "Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou has sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom though hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which though hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." These five verses tell us what Jesus' desire is for the body of believers, his church. In other words, these verses communicate to us the general purpose of God for us as the body of Jesus Christ. In the previous chapter, we mainly looked at God's purpose for us as individual believers. In this chapter, we are looking at God's purpose for us as the corporate body of believers in his Son Jesus Christ.

In particular, I would like to mention three things that Jesus desires for his church with regards to his prayer in John 17:20-24. First, we learn that Jesus desires that we become one in the Father and himself so that we might be made perfect in one. Next, we learn about Jesus' desired method of evangelizing the world, namely, that through us becoming one, the world would come to believe that God the Father sent Jesus into the world. Finally, these verses tell us that it is Jesus' desire that we as a perfect body be with him where he is so that we might behold his eternal glory.

The result of learning what Jesus' desire is for his church is that we are thereby taught what our own desire should be as the

church of Jesus Christ. We have received Jesus' glory and we are greatly and perfectly loved by the Father and the Son. Oh, what glory there is in us having the same mind and desires as the Son of God! Oh, what glory there is in us being one and the same with the Father and the Son!

To be more specific, we should first desire to become one body, perfect in love for one another in the Father and the Son. Next, it should be our desire that our oneness with each other be able to communicate to the world that God the Father has indeed sent his Son Jesus into the world to be the Savior of the world. Finally, we learn that it should be our desire to be with Jesus Christ where he is so that we might behold his eternal glory face to face. It is my intention to spend the rest of this chapter briefly looking at these three desires of the body of Jesus Christ.

To begin with, it should be our desire to become one in Jesus Christ. Jesus likens his church to a family, calling those who believe in him the children of God and brothers. (Luke 20:36, Hebrews 2:12, and also Galatians 3:26 for a reference from Paul) Jesus became a man so that he could make a family among mankind. (Hebrews 2:13-14) In Jesus' family, all members have all things in common and the strong take care of the weak. (Acts 2:44, Acts 4:32, and 1 Corinthians 12:18-27) In Jesus' family, the greatest is the least and the least is the greatest. (Luke 22:25-27) In Jesus' family, there are no divisions or schisms, for all members know him and know that he is the essence of our very existence. (1 Corinthians 12:25 and 1 John 5:20) He is in us and we are in him. (1 John 4:15-16) So, with all of this in mind, it should only be natural for us to want to become one and united.

God has given us the freedom in Jesus Christ to make our own decisions and live according to the wonderful liberty that he has bestowed upon us. It is through this liberty that we can serve one another by love. As we saw in the preceding chapters, love is the bond of perfection in Jesus Christ. It is only reasonable, therefore, to assume that all of those who believe in him love one

another. It is through our love for one another that we become one.

At this point, I would like to draw a distinction here between what I mentioned in the preceding chapters and what I am talking about now. On one hand, I am still talking about us loving each other, but on the other hand, the scale of this love has increased to not only include our own churches, but the whole church of Jesus Christ in general.

The whole church of Jesus Christ includes all of those who believe in Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus Christ is what we have in common and this commonality surpasses all things regardless of what they might be. Yea, let it be nationality, race, gender, family, culture, social-status, financial-status, education and so on, Jesus is greater. Not only this, but our commonality in Jesus Christ surpasses our denominational divides. Let's just think about something for a second: if we really believe that whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life, 99.9% of the disagreements in our churches would cease. We would be so overwhelmed in our Savior Jesus that love would just flow out of our hearts for one another. We would know nothing other than him and talk about nothing other than him. His songs would be on our lips all day and we would long for fellowship with anyone who also knows him as Savior.

To give a specific example of the love that creates oneness among us, I would like to talk about the idea of unrelated churches loving one another. (When I say unrelated churches, I am not referring to churches that are dangerously heretical, cultic, and just plain-out unbiblical. Rather, I am talking about mainstream and biblical churches that may, for example, hold different denominational ties, affiliations, or slightly different doctrinal teachings.) To be specific, if we really saw one another as brothers and sisters simply for the fact that we all believe in Jesus, I really believe that there would be less emphasis on planting and growing churches and more emphasis on helping and healing existing churches. I often wonder why there are so many church plants and

so many new church strategies being implemented in areas where churches have long been established. Do we really believe that God wants something new? Do we really believe that God is looking for better methods to grow his church? Do we really think that God prefers quantity over quality? I don't think so. Let me just say that God has no pleasure in churches competing for their own survival. He has no pleasure in churches adopting new methods so that they can experience "growth." Jesus Christ is the only method and God the Father is only interested in faith in Jesus Christ that works by love. It astounds me that there are so many missionaries working overseas trying to establish churches where they already exist. Wouldn't it be better to help the churches that already exist? Wouldn't love much rather prompt us to go and help struggling churches just because they go by the name of Jesus Christ? Aren't these weak churches full of the least of Jesus' brethren? There is much more honor in trying to help and heal that which is sick and broken and ready to die than there is in starting something new. Just think about it, Jesus Christ came into the world to save that which was sick and broken and ready to die. He did not throw away the human race and just start over. It should be the same with us. We should prefer to heal rather than to destroy.

I realize that it may sometimes be necessary to establish new churches where they already exist. In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus makes it clear that it is possible for a church to fall so far that it in fact dies. However, it is not the heart of Jesus Christ to destroy. Jesus Christ would much rather see his churches revive strength and live than just pass away in death. He would much rather have us work for the healing of his churches than to just throw them away and start over with bigger and better plans. To make clearer and give support for what I am trying to say, I would like us to take a look a passage of scripture from the Old Testament. It is found in Exodus 32:7-14 and 32:30-35.

“7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy

people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. 11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. 14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people...30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. 31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. 32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. 33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. 34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. 35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron

made.”

In this story, we see at that the Lord was so angry with his people because of their sin that he wanted to destroy them. He says to Moses, “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” Thus, it was the will of the Lord to destroy this nation of people and start over again. Moses had heard the voice of the Lord. He had heard the Lord's will. He had received his vision and calling to be the leader of a new and great nation. Who can resist the will of the Lord? Who would be foolish enough to disobey? The voice of the Lord is clear in this passage. Moses calling is to be done with this worthless bunch of misfits and to become the leader of a much better nation. We would think that Moses would humbly accept his calling and vision; however, what happens next is quite to the contrary. Moses does not accept, but rather unhesitatingly challenges the Lord to spare his people and forgive them. Moses beseeches the Lord for mercy. Moses knows that the people are sick and broken and ready to die, but he pleads for them with all of his heart. It is as if he says to the Lord, “Don't make a new nation, but heal and forgive the nation that you already have.” Not only this, but Moses is so intent on saving the lives of the people that he offers his own life in place of theirs. (verse 32) Moses is saying that he would much rather die the pains of hell than see this worthless bunch of misfits perish. This disobedient nation goes by the name of the Lord, and that alone makes them worthy of salvation.

I believe that we need to have the heart of Moses. Regardless of whatever vision or calling we or our churches might have, love is infinitely greater. “Not new churches, O' Lord... but, please, heal the churches that already exist. Not new and better leaders, O' Lord, but revive the ones that already exist so that they might fulfill your will for us in Jesus Christ. O' God heal! My life is in agony over this!”

Love in Jesus Christ is what we the church need. It is through love that we become one. If we compare the portion of scripture found in John 17:20-26 with the scripture found in John 13:34-35, it becomes clear that the oneness that Jesus is referring to is the result of our mutual love for one another. As we receive Jesus' love for us, it becomes natural that we love one another. This is the work of Jesus in his church, namely, to create a body that wholly and completely edifies itself in love from head to foot. Jesus, the head, works in us, so that we might work together in one another in perfect harmony and peace. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

It goes without saying that this oneness in the church as a whole starts with our churches individually. If our individual churches are not abiding in love, then we cannot minister this love to other churches. We must learn that before we can do something big, we must do that which is small. If we can't be trusted with that which is small, why in the world would Jesus commit to us greater things? Thus, love begins in our own small churches and spreads out into the body as a whole. In other words, it is only through the perfect bond of love in our individual churches that the oneness of the body as a whole even becomes conceivable. When we believers love another, our love will naturally pour out into other churches and eventually the whole world.

This brings me to the next topic at hand, namely, that when we the church as a whole become one, we should desire our oneness to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. This is the promise given us in John 13:34-35 and John 17:21-23 and this is God's preferred method of evangelism. Let's take one more look at the verses found in John 13 and 17 and compare them to a very familiar passage of scripture found in Matthew 28:18-20.

“34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love

one to another.” (John 13:34-35)

“21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:21-23)

“18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

I believe that if we read the above three passages of scripture carefully, it becomes apparent what the will of Jesus Christ is for us pertaining to evangelism and missions. Matthew 28:18-20 is a passage of scripture that is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. Our commission is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the world and make disciples. (Also see Luke 24:47 and Mark 16:15.) However, what exactly does this mean? I believe that a careful read of Matthew 28:18-20 holds the answer to this question. Reading the passage again, Jesus is mainly telling his apostles to teach all nations by teaching them to obey everything that Jesus had commanded them. So, what exactly are the commandments of Jesus Christ? Namely, his commandments are for us to believe in him and love one another. It is through believing in him that we are saved and it is through believing in him that everything else good follows such as holiness, prayers, good works, and evangelism. However, as we saw earlier, the

greatest work of faith in Jesus Christ is love. Through believing in Jesus' love for us, we in turn bear the fruits of love naturally and abundantly. I believe that this is the reason why the apostles' letters speak more to us about faith and love than any other topic. Read the letters again carefully starting from Paul's letters all the way to Jude's letter. There is a hundred times more emphasis on faith in Jesus that works by love than there is on us getting involved in evangelism and outreach to the unsaved. Why would this be? The answer must be that this is how the apostles understood Jesus' commandment to teach all nations. The apostles taught by showing forth the faith in Jesus that works by love. Their longing plea was for us to love one another and do good to each other in faith and truth. If we are faithful to each other, God will be faithful to us and our churches. However, if we don't become one in love and faith, how can we expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son into the world? Therefore, let's be faithful to one another as the body of Jesus Christ. If we are faithful to each other, God will be faithful to us and add to our churches as many as should be saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

To say it again, if we become one in Jesus, the world will know that the Father sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. We have to believe this. This is a simple message. Let's just become one in love. We don't need better methods and strategies to get people into our churches. We don't need to think of ways to make the Gospel more attractive and friendly. Let's just believe that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world and that he is faithful to his word. Let's desire to see Jesus fulfill his truth in us and in the world. Let's become one in love and we will be sure to see the goodness of God communicated to the whole world.

Finally, our desire as the church of Jesus Christ should be to be with Jesus where he is and behold his glory as the only begotten Son of God. As Jesus puts it in John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou

lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Jesus here is telling the Father clearly that it is his desire for us to be with him and behold his glory. Oh, how lovely this is indeed! The lover of our souls desires us! Oh, how this melts our hearts in reciprocated love for him! Oh, how this makes us declare with Paul, “[I have] a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” (Philippians 1:23) This is the hope of the body of Jesus Christ, namely, to be with our head! Just as we can't imagine a body without a head, we likewise can't imagine the church without Jesus Christ. Our destiny from the foundation of the world has been to be with him where he is so that we can behold his glory!

This passage in John tells us much about heaven. Heaven is a place filled with the glory of Jesus Christ. Heaven is all about Jesus Christ. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that heaven itself is Jesus Christ, for he is in it all and it is in him and he is the fullness of it. Heaven is the place where we behold the glory of Jesus face to face. Knowing this, it should only be natural for us to long for the day of his coming when we will be gathered up to be with him. Knowing this, our best thoughts and dreams in this world should be Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone, for he is our past, present, and future and our eternal existence is summed up in his name! Knowing this, “we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed up with our house which is from heaven...We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:2-8)

Thinking about the things to come, our desire for Jesus should grow more and more. We, the church, should be eagerly expecting and waiting for his arrival so that we unite our prayers and heart groanings as we say “Come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20) Our oneness in this desire for Jesus' coming is essential and most important. Just as a body is not complete without its head, a body is likewise incomplete without its hands or its feet. (In other words, we are the body parts, and thus, we must be united in our desires. 1 Corinthians 12:3-27) We need to be one, waiting for our

head. When Jesus comes, the body is complete and we are united in eternal love and glory. Oh, how we should be “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” (2 Peter 3:12)

Jesus' coming is dreadful and fearful to the unbelieving world, but to us who are saved, it is altogether magnificent and the completeness of all things. We can have confidence in his coming for we, in child-like faith, believe the simplicity of the promise given to us: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47) We have nothing else to hold unto but his faithfulness. He made us a promise to save us and sealed that promise in the blood of his cross. He rose again and we, too, have had our hearts risen in eager anticipation for the day of our redemption. Because he lives, we live and we shall live. We shall live forever as a family with our God Jesus and his Father. We know that the world can't receive these things. To the world these things are foolish. Yea, even more so, these things are fearful to an unbelieving world. However, to us who are sealed by his Holy Spirit, we have the confidence to say, “Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

The purpose of God is fulfilled in the gathering of all of the saints unto himself. Let's desire this day more than we desire anything else. Let's never make excuses regardless of how reasonable they may seem to us. Let's throw away any thoughts that would hinder his coming. Jesus Christ desires a people who are waiting for him. He desires a people who long to be with him. He desires a people who put him before anyone and anything else. He is coming for those who are waiting for him and he is coming for those who love his coming. (Hebrews 9:28 and 2 Timothy 4:8)

As the church of Jesus Christ, let's not come behind in any of these things, for this is the desire of the whole earth. This is the earnest expectation of all things created and uncreated. (Romans 8:19-25 and John 17:24) Jesus himself has declared, “Surely I come quickly.” (Revelation 22:20) For nearly, 2000 years he has been preparing our heavenly home and perfecting his body. (John

14:3 and Ephesians 5:25-27) He has been making his preparations all of this time so let's be helpers together with him. Let's fulfill his word and become one in faith and love, and thereby hasten the day of his coming.

In conclusion, I would like to just say again that our future is bright and glorious. Let's take heart and be courageous. Jesus is the Savior of the world and he is faithful to save all of those who believe on him. He sees us and he desires to be with us. He knows that many of us are weary and weak. He knows that many of us are the least of his brethren. He has not forgotten his beloved ones. His thoughts toward us are good and our humbleness will make our future glory even that much more glorious. So, let's take heart and desire him more than we desire our next breath. Let's go and stay before him as little children. Let's stay before him in complete adoration. He is our God and he is our redeemer. Let's praise God the Father for sending his Son and let's bow down before the Son in faith and innocence. He knows us and he knows that we are unable to offer him anything. It is for this reason that he says, "Come and rest. Just believe in me and you will be saved and live forever." (Matthew 11:28 and John 6:47)

It is my longing desire that this book has been a light and a comfort to the people of Jesus Christ. May God be with us all and may our eyes and hearts always be toward him. May our love for one another overflow like a glorious fountain. May we become one in him. Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

