

# **Glory to Glory**



**Book 1**

## **The journey begins**

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# **1. Assurance of salvation**

The purpose of this study is to help you to be sure that you will go to heaven when you die. Jesus said that, unless you are *born again*, you cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3). This means that you need to experience spiritual rebirth if you want to go to heaven. Your first birth takes place when your mother gives birth to you (a physical birth). Your second birth takes place when and if you personally invite Jesus into your life as your Lord and Saviour. When you do this, He grants you the right to become a child of God, and you are born into God's family (John 1:11,12). You become an heir of eternal salvation. We call this your spiritual birth.

If you have not been born again, you will have no inner assurance of eternal life; and your eternal destiny will not be heaven, but hell. The Bible says that hell is a place of eternal separation from God, where you undergo unimaginable torment and suffering (2 Thess 1: 8,9). If, however, you have been spiritually reborn, you will have an inner assurance that you are on your way to heaven. The Bible describes heaven as a wonderful place. No eye has seen, no ear heard, nor has any heart ever imagined the wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9).

**What qualifies us for heaven?** The Bible says that God loved the world so much that He gave up His Son, Jesus, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it - through Him (John 3:16,17). He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. Each one of us will face the same question when we stand before God one day in eternity: "What did you do with Jesus and His death on the cross for you?" We do not make it to heaven because we are good, nor do we go to hell because we are bad. *We go to heaven if we receive by faith the gift of salvation that Jesus purchased for us on the cross.*

Let's see what does NOT qualify us for heaven.

Firstly, we do not go to heaven because we are good people. There are many good people who are not born again. We cannot measure goodness by our human standards. Jesus stated that "there is only one who is good, and that is God" (Matt 19:17). The Bible indicates that our good deeds are like filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). God's standard of goodness is infinitely higher than ours. If we break only one of the Ten Commandments, we fall short of His goodness. In Romans 3:23 it says that "all people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God".

Secondly, we do not go to heaven because we do the things that Christians do. Many people read their Bibles, pray, and go to church, but this does not mean that they are born again. Jesus said, "You must be born again!" If you take a fish and throw it into a river, it will swim. That's what fish do. If you yourself jump into the river, you may be able to duplicate the fish's actions and swim. However, this does not make you a fish. To be a fish, you must be born a fish! We are not Christians because we do the things Christians do. We need to be born again by the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, we do not go to heaven just because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Many people believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but not all have been born again. The Bible says that even the devils believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and they tremble (James 2:19). Jesus warns us that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord" will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of His Father (Matt 7:21). If we want to experience spiritual rebirth, we must believe that the Bible is the word of God. The Bible states that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is the inspired word of God. Therefore, if we follow the directions in the Bible on how to receive eternal life, then God will keep His word and give us eternal life. He will do what He has promised in the Bible. It is impossible for Him to lie (Heb 6:17-18).

The Bible says that "by grace (undeserved favour) you have been saved through faith. And this salvation is not of your own doing - it is the gift of God! It is not the result of your works or efforts" (Ephesians 2:8,9). You are saved by grace through faith. Grace is what *God* did for us! He offered us the free gift of salvation. Faith is what *we* do. We receive by faith the gift of salvation offered to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **There are three requirements for being born again:**

There are three requirements that you need to fulfill in order to be born again and go to heaven when you die.

**Firstly, you must repent.** The Bible says that "godly sorrow produces repentance, which leads to salvation" (2 Cor 7:10). Repentance means that you acknowledge that you are a sinner who deserves God's judgment. You admit that you cannot save yourself so you come to Jesus to save you. You ask Him to forgive all your sins, and you surrender your life to Him. You turn away from your sins. The Bible says: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

**Secondly, you should surrender your life to Jesus and personally invite Him into your heart to be your Lord and Saviour.** "To all those who receive Him,

He gives the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). Make a decision to follow Jesus with all your heart even if you have to pay a great price to do so. Jesus said: "Unless you deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple" (Luke 9:23).

Thirdly, you must confess Him to be your Lord and Saviour. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). You should be willing to tell others openly that you have accepted Jesus. It should not be a secret. Your public acknowledgment that Jesus is your Lord will secure your salvation. Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt 10:32).

What difference should it make in your life? What are some of the changes that you can expect in your life once you have surrendered your life to Jesus?

Firstly, you should have the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart that you are born again. The Bible says that "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16). You will also become more aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. "God has sealed us, and given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit in our hearts" (2 Cor 1:22). You should also experience an increased sensitivity to sin, causing you to feel very uncomfortable when you do wrong. "When He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

**Secondly, when you invite Jesus into your life, you become a brand new person.** You are born again. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor 5:17). You should have a new desire to serve and obey God. The Amplified Bible says that "no-one born of God deliberately, knowingly, and habitually practices sin, for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot practice sinning because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9). You will have a desire to meet and have fellowship with other Christians. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren (our fellow Christians)" (1 John 3:14). If you have not yet received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour and would like to do so, you can pray the following prayer:

*"Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that I deserve to go to hell. I ask You to forgive me for all my sins and cleanse me from all my unrighteousness. I believe that You died for me and carried my sins on the cross. By faith I receive Your forgiveness and the gift of salvation. I invite you to come and live in my heart as my Lord and Saviour. I surrender my whole life to You now. I believe that You rose from the dead, and you are the Son of*

*the Living God. I now confess with my mouth that You are my Lord. I now believe that I am saved, born again, and have received the gift of eternal life. In Jesus name." Amen.*

## **1.2. The importance of Water Baptism.**

Now that you are Born Again and you know that you are going to heaven, what is the next important step that you need to take as a Christian? The answer is, "you must be baptized in water." Why is this so important? There are a number of reasons.

The first reason, Jesus commanded us to be baptized: He said in **Matthew 28:19**, "*Go into all the world, and make disciples and baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.*" When I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I was attending a small Baptist church in the city of Pietermaritzburg in South Africa. A few weeks after my wonderful Born Again experience, the Baptist pastor approached me and asked me to consider being baptized in water. I objected and said it was not necessary, because I am Born Again and going to heaven. He then asked me a very pointed question, "Dave, do you love Jesus?" I replied, "of course I do!" He then referred me to **John 14:23**, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.*" Jesus commanded us to be baptized. I did not have an argument and agreed to be baptized as soon as possible.

The second reason is that it was the pattern in the early church. Every time someone received Jesus in the book of Acts, they were immediately baptized. For example: **Acts 2:41** we read, "*They who received his word, were baptized.*" This happened on the day of Pentecost. In **Acts 8:36-38** We the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip preached to him and obviously led him to Jesus. As they were riding in the chariot they saw water, he then asked Philip, "*see here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?*" Philip then answered him in **verse 37**, "*If you believe in your heart you may be baptized.*" In **verse 38** it says that they both went "*into the water.*"

We notice two very important truths. Firstly, he had to believe from his heart that Jesus was his Lord. So, water baptism is only for those who believe. Therefore, a baby cannot believe, and baptizing babies has no meaning. Secondly, they both went into the water and came out of the water. There is the correct way to baptize new believers, they must go into the water and come out of the water. Why is this so important? It is because water baptism

is a prophetic action, a public declaration of what happened to us when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

In **Acts 10:31-48** we read about Peter preaching in the house of Cornelius. As he preached the gospel, they believed in Jesus and the Holy Spirit fell on them, they spoke in tongues and prophesized. In **verse 47** he says, "*can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized?*" We notice here, that it was not only important for them to be baptized in water, but it was also urgent. This pattern occurs throughout the book of Acts, those that believed were immediately baptized. In **Acts 16:33** we read how the household of the Philippian jailor could not even wait until the following morning, they had to be immediately baptized. One of the lies of the devil is, "You are not ready to be baptized!" The truth is that we are ready, the moment we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Philip said to the Ethiopian eunuch, "*If you believe in your heart you may be baptized.*"

The word baptize comes from the Greek word, "baptizo" which means to "dip" or put under the water. It is a prophetic action that points to the cross when Jesus died, was buried and rose on the third day. It is therefore a public confession of our faith in Jesus. We died with Him, we were buried with Him and we rose again in newness of life. Therefore, to sprinkle babies or adults has no meaning.

This prophetic action is a declaration not only before people, but also before the unseen spirit realm. It is a public testimony before God, the angels, the devil and the demons and people that we now belong to Jesus. It is not just an empty ritual, but a means for us to release our faith and experience what it really means. We should begin to experience a greater degree of freedom from sin and victory in Christ. I definitely noticed this in my own life after I was baptized in water. I once heard a testimony of a former witch who had received Jesus. They prayed for her many times to be free from demons, but the demons would leave and come back again over and over. One day the pastor asked her if she had been baptized in water. She said 'no.' However, when she was baptized the demons left and she was totally free.

I remember travelling to a remote village in Kyrgyzstan. I met a believer who was suffering from torment and depression. He asked me to pray for him. I asked him if he had been baptized. He said "no." I shared with him the importance of water baptism. We then baptized him in a bath in one of the apartments. As he came out of the water, he lifted his hands in joy and was free from his oppression. We have seen many people have wonderful

encounters with the Holy Spirit as they came out of the waters of baptism. Many of them received the baptism of the Holy Spirit after they came out of the waters of baptism. That is why Peter said in **Acts 2:38**, "*Repent and be baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

As I have said before, water baptism points to what happened on the cross when we received Jesus. Just as He died, was buried and rose again on the third day, in the same way, our old lives died with Jesus on the cross, was buried (it no longer stinks) and we have receive new resurrection life in Jesus. We read about this in **Romans 6:4** "*Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into His death: that just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.*" If we put our faith in God's word through this prophetic action, then what we declare through water baptism can become our experience.

We have another example in of this prophetic action in **1 Corinthians 10:1-2** "*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*" It is speaking about the Children of Israel that passed through the Red Sea. This is a type of Water Baptism. Egypt speaks about our old lives, Pharaoh is a type of the devil and the army of pharaoh is a type of the demons that attack us.

Just as the Red Sea cut them off from Egypt and the army of pharaoh was destroyed, so through water baptism not only has our old sinful nature died, but we have been legally cut off from the influence of the devil and his demons. In **Colossians 1:13** we read "*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.*" No wonder, church history tells us of the terrible persecution that came upon those who were baptized in water. Thousands died for their faith because they were baptized in water. Water Baptism is opposed by the powers of darkness because the devil knows that once we have been baptized in water, he has lost his legal influence over our lives.

I want to look at a verse that has confused many. In **Mark 16:16** Jesus says, "*He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" Does this mean that we must be baptized in order to go to heaven? We know this cannot be so because there have been people who received Jesus and were not able to be baptized. For example, there are those who die in hospitals and were not able to be baptized. The thief on the

cross, who was also not baptized, who received Jesus, also went straight to heaven.

To understand this verse, we must look at the second part, *“he who does not believe is condemned”*. It does not say, *“He who does not believe and is not baptized.”* We go to heaven because we believe and not because we are baptized. Philip said to the Eunuch, *“If you believe from your heart!”* (**Acts 8:37**) So what does it mean, *“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved?”* We get the answer from **1 Peter 3:19-21** which speaks about the days of Noah and the flood. In **verse 20** it says that, *“eight souls were saved though water.”* In **verse 21** it says *“There is an antitype that now saves us - baptism.”* The word “antitype” can also mean, “type, figure or picture.” What does this mean?

What did the baptism of the flood save Noah and his family from? It saved them from the world. The world drowned beneath them. Therefore, in the same way, water baptism is a type of the flood of Noah that saves us from the spirit and the influence of the world. That is why water baptism is such an important step of obedience. It is not just a ritual, but a powerful prophetic action that enables us to release our faith to be free from the influence of the world.

To summarize, we need to answer the following important four questions:

Who should baptize us? Answer: It should be the leaders in the church or the person that led us to Jesus. We have the example of Philip and the eunuch.

Philip baptized How should we be baptized? Answer: We must be immersed under the water because it is a prophetic action that points to the cross.

Where should we be baptized? Answer: Preferably in a public place in front of witnesses.

When should we be baptized? Answer: As soon as possible after you receive Jesus as Lord and Savior!

Finally, Jesus is our greatest example. We read in **Matthew 3:13-16**. *“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* Jesus lived on earth as a man, becoming an example of how we should live (**1 Peter 2:21**). If it was important for Jesus to be baptized, it should be important to us as well.

**Amen**

### **3. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit**

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is one of the greatest needs in the church today and often a doctrine. It was so important to Jesus that He commanded His disciples to "... *tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (**Luke 24:49**) He would not allow them to preach and do anything for Him until they received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Today, many think that because they have been to Bible School and know the Bible, that they are ready to do the work of the Lord. The truth is that without the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, we are not ready to do anything for God.

The reason why there are so many casualties on the mission field and in ministry is that many have tried to go out and do the work of the Lord without the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, if everyone in the church was baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, there would be such blessing and revival! One of the last words that Jesus spoke before ascending to heaven was "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (**Acts 1:8**)

When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us. The Bible says "(God) *has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*" We have an inward witness that we are God's children. (**2 Corinthians 1:22**) In Romans 8:16, we read, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" We cannot be born again without the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit imparts the life of Jesus into our human spirits to be born again. However, it is not enough to only have the Holy Spirit in us; we must also have His power. In order to have this power we must be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

The term, "the baptism with the Holy Spirit" comes from a number of scriptures. John the Baptist said: "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*" (**Matthew 3:11**) Peter said: "*Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'*" (**Acts 11:16**)

Imagine pouring water into a bottle, we would then say, the "water is in the bottle." Then if we throw the bottle into a river, we would then say, "The bottle is in the water." This is an analogy of the difference of having the Holy Spirit in us, and being baptized with the Holy Spirit. When we are Born Again, the Holy Spirit comes into us. But when we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, the

Holy Spirit comes upon us and we are immersed into the Holy Spirit. We see this pattern in the examples in the Book of Acts.

My testimony: When I was born again, I joined a Baptist Church. Two years later I began to realize that there was another experience called the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. I read books about it, heard testimonies about it and saw it in the Bible. I approached my godly Baptist pastor and asked him how I could be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Although he did not believe in speaking in tongues, he lent me a book by Andrew Murray to help me. In this book I found the key that enabled me to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. That key was faith. In **Galatians 3:2** we read, "... Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" We read further in the chapter "...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (**Galatians 3:14**) Everything we receive from God is by faith.

I then prayed the following prayer, "*Lord, I believe that from reading the Book of Acts, that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, is scriptural. Furthermore, I believe that You are no respecter of persons, and because you did this for others, You will also do so for me. By faith I now receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and by faith I will now speak with other tongues. For You said, "These signs shall follow those who believe ... they would speak with new tongues."* (Mark 16:17)

I then raised my hands, took a step of faith and spoke in tongues. I did this by faith! A thought then came to my mind, "*this is not tongues but gibberish.*" I silenced that thought and said, "*I am doing this by faith, and by faith I am being baptized with the Holy Spirit.*" The following morning as I woke up I found myself speaking in a new language. This was not a dramatic experience, but a simple step of faith. What I did notice that in the weeks that followed, it began to be easier for me to lead people to Christ and I began to see more miracles as I prayed for people. I also noticed that the more I spoke in tongues; the language became more and more profound.

#### Examples from the Book of Acts:

**Acts Chapter 2: 2-4:** "*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

Notice the Holy Spirit came upon them and the room was filled. This implies that they were immersed in the Spirit. (Remember the water in the water illustration). They also began to speak with other tongues as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They spoke in tongues but the Spirit gave them the ability to do so. Jesus referred to this as being baptized with the Holy Spirit in **Acts 1:5** *"For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

**Acts Chapter 8 verse 14-18:** We read, *"...who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given..."* The Baptism with the Holy Spirit was imparted to them by the laying on of hands of the apostles.

The word "receive" can also mean "come upon" (Strong's). There was visible evidence that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit when Peter and John laid hands on them. It does not say that they spoke in tongues, but it implies that something happened and they knew that the new believers had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Possibly it was the same manifestation that they saw on the day of Pentecost.

**Acts Chapter 9 verse 17:** *"And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."* Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid his hands on him. It does not say here that Paul spoke in tongues, but we do know that Paul did so, for in **1 Corinthians 14:18** we read, *"I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all."*

**Acts Chapter 10 verses 44-46:** *"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God."*

The Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke with tongues and magnified the Lord. Peter referred to this as the Baptism with the Holy Spirit in **Chapter 11:15-16**. *"Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"*

**Acts Chapter 19 verse 6:** We read, “*And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*” When Paul laid his hands on believers in Corinth; they received the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues. Therefore, the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is often received by the laying on of hands.

In three out of the five examples from the book of Acts, the believers spoke with tongues when they were baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. The other two examples imply this. In fact in **Acts chapter 10**, Peter recognized that Cornelius and his friends had received the gift of the Holy Spirit because he heard them speaking with tongues.

In order for us to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, we must first of all be convinced that it is scriptural, for the Bible says that, “*faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” (**Romans 10:17**) Secondly, we must be sure that we are Born Again and have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Although there are many ways that God can use, following steps can enable you to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

(1) We must confess and repent of any known sin in our lives. It is true that the Holy Spirit can fill us even if we do not confess and repent, for example in **Acts chapter 10**. However, un-confessed sin can hinder us from receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. This is especially true with regards to un-forgiveness and bitterness. I have noticed in some cases, those who repented of un-forgiveness and bitterness were able to speak in tongues with greater ease.

(3) We can ask Jesus to baptize us with the Holy Spirit: The Bible says, “... *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” (**Matthew 3:11**) The Bible also says, “*that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us,*” (**1 John 5:14**) Therefore, we ask Jesus to Baptize us with the Holy Spirit, which is His will for us, and if we ask anything according to God's will, He hears us!

(4) We can take a step of faith and speak in tongues: Jesus said, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. ... this He spoke concerning the Holy Spirit.*” (**John 7:37**) This is a step of faith! Just as we lay hands upon the sick as a step of faith to heal the sick, so we speak in tongues as a step of faith to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is helpful to worship in our own language for a few minutes, then stop, and then by faith begin worship Him in tongues. (**1 Corinthians 14:15**)

(5) We can get others to lay hands on us: Often, when those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, lay hands on us, we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This happened in Acts when Paul laid his hands on the disciples in Ephesus, (**Acts 19:6**) they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues.

It is our decision to speak in tongues. Paul wrote "*I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding*". (**1 Corinthians 14:15**) The Holy Spirit will not speak for us but give us the words so that we can speak in tongues. These words do not come from our minds, but from our spirit. The regular practice of speaking with tongues will enable us to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself*". (**1 Corinthians 14:4**) Paul was an example of this; he boasted that he spoke in tongues more than anyone else. (**1 Corinthians 14:18**)

**Finally:** The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the initial experience to receive the power of God. However, we need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. In **Acts 4:31** we read "*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*" Many of these were the same disciples who were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Bible says, "*be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be (continually) filled with the Spirit.*" (**Ephesians 5:18**) Therefore it is very important to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and thereafter to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## **1.4. The importance of repentance**

Repentance is one of the most important doctrines in the Bible. It was the message of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. He said in **Matthew 3:2** "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" It was also the very first message that Jesus preached when He said, "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" The word at hand means, "*It is now within your reach.*" Eternal life and the benefits of the Kingdom are now within your reach!

The word repentance means: To change your mind, to be sorry for your sins or to make a different decision. In **2 Corinthians 7:10** we read "*For godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation.*" Repentance is a deep sorrow for our sins that will cause us to change our behavior and the way we think. In **Luke 3:8**, John the Baptist said, "*Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.*" Repentance produces fruit. Therefore, if there is no change in our lives, it means that we have not repented. There must be fruit!

Repentance has three steps: Firstly, it means to acknowledge and confess our sin before God and others. **1 John 1:9**. "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Secondly, it means to take steps of obedience to turn away from the sin. **Proverbs 28:13**. "*He that covers his sin will not prosper, but he that confesses and forsakes will have mercy.*" It is not good enough to only confess. We must confess and forsake! John the Baptist said in **Luke 3:8**: "*Bear fruit worthy of repentance.*"

And thirdly it is important to turn to God. **1 Thessalonians 1:9**: "*and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*" It is not good enough only to turn away from sin, we need to turn to God. This will make our repentance complete. We need to surrender that area in our lives to the Lord.

**There are two types of repentance:**

First of all: Repentance for salvation: Peter said in **Acts 3:19**. "*Repent therefore and be converted so that your sins can be blotted out.*" In **Acts 17:30-31** Paul told the people of Athens, "*... the times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commands all men everywhere to repent...*" It is obvious that a sinner cannot confess every sin that he has committed, but he can ask God to forgive him for living a life of sin. Without repentance, we cannot have eternal life. Jesus warned us in **Luke 13:3**, "*Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.*"

Repentance for salvation is a once off experience. After we have repented, turned away from our sin and received Jesus as Lord and Savior, God then forgives us all our sin. We read about this in **Colossians 2:13**, "*....having forgiven us all our trespasses.*" In **Romans 5:1** we also read that we have *been justified by faith*. The word 'justified', means 'to be made righteous'. It is as if we have never sinned and if we suddenly died, we will go to heaven.

Therefore, we do not have to continually repent and receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior!

Secondly: Repentance after salvation: The question we now need to answer. *"If I have repented and received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, do I still need to repent of my sins?"* Why do we still need to repent of our sins, after we have given our lives to Jesus and He has forgiven us all our sins? It is because repentance after salvation does not affect our eternal destiny with God but our relationship with Him and our spiritual experience on earth. Repentance removes the legal right that the devil can use against us to rob us of God's blessing.

**1 John 1:9** says *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The word to cleanse means 'to continually cleanse.' As Christians we need to continually confess our sins so that God can continually forgive and cleanses us. Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 7:11**. *"For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! He is writing this to Christians!*

Repentance also releases God's grace to have victory in the area in which we repent. In **2 Corinthians 7:10** we read, *"Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation."* The word salvation means; eternal life, healing, deliverance and freedom." Often spiritual breakthrough and revival follows repentance. In **Isaiah 57:15** it says that God revives the heart of the contrite (repentant) ones. Continual regular repentance after salvation will enable us to grow spiritually and deepen our relationship with Jesus.

The example of the Tabernacle: Whenever the children of Israel sinned in the Old Testament, they brought continual sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins to the brazen altar at the entrance of the Tabernacle. This is a type of our continual daily repentance, where we confess our sins and ask God to cleanse us. However, once a year the priest took the blood of a lamb into the Holiest of all to make atonement for the people. This was not a sacrifice for daily sins, but a sacrifice that affected their position before God in eternity. In the same way Jesus our High Priest, went into the Holiest of All in heaven and obtained eternal forgiveness for us. We read about this in **Hebrews 10:14**. *"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."*

Important principles of repentance:

1. Difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it is like a “sharp word or feeling” telling us that we have sinned. When we repent, the conviction leaves. We have an example of this in **Acts 2:37**; “*They were cut to the heart and said, men and brethren, what must we do to be saved.*” The conviction of sin led them to repentance.

On the other hand, the devil condemns us. This usually happens after we have repented and we continue to feel bad about our sin. The Bible makes it clear in **Romans 8:1**, “*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ...*” Therefore, after we have repented and confessed our sin, we must believe that God has completely forgiven and cleansed us from that sin and renounce all feeling of condemnation.

2. There is a difference between the root and the fruit of a sin: In **Luke 3:9**, John the Baptist said, “*Now the axe must be laid to the root.*” The fruit of the sin is the outward manifestation, but the root of the sin is the cause. There are a number of roots to sin such as, pride, selfishness, fear, greed, unbelief, etc. When we repent of the root, the fruit will die. For example, if we want a tree to die, we must kill it at the root. We can find the root by asking the question, “Why did I do it? or What was my motive?” If we repent of our motives, our actions will automatically change.

3. Restitution or restoration is necessary: We have the example of Zaccheas in **Luke 19:9**. He made a decision to restore money that he had stolen and Jesus said to him, “*Today salvation has come to your house.*” The prodigal son said in **Luke 15:18**, “*I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.*” Restitution is to put right that what we have done wrong. We may need to return things what we have stolen, pay our debts, tell the truth to those before whom we have lied and put right where we have done wrong to people. We need to take action to make our repentance complete.

Years ago, when I worked in Africa, I scratched the car of a missionary from Canada who stayed with us. I did not tell him about it and after he left to go back to Canada, the Holy Spirit told me to make restitution and give him \$200 for the damage. About seven years later he visited me in South Africa. The Holy Spirit reminded me of what I had done. I confessed what I had done and gave him the \$200. He was so blessed by what I did that he gave me more than what I had given him. It was like Zaccheas, “blessing came to my household.”

4. We must take full responsibility for our sin. We must be careful not to blame other people when we sin. We must not be like Adam who blamed Eve and like Eve who blamed the serpent. We cannot blame the pastor or marriage partner for the things that we have done wrong. For example, if there is conflict between two people and they both repent, in the eyes of God, they are both 100 percent wrong. In **Psalms 32:5** David said, “*I acknowledged my sin before You.*” He was saying to God, “I have sinned, it is my fault.” When the Prodigal son returned to his father, he said “I have sinned against you.”

5. Repentance is not a license to sin. **Romans 6:1-2:** “*Shall we sin that grace may abound, certainly not...*” We cannot use repentance as an excuse to sin. For example, “I can commit adultery today because tomorrow I can repent.” We need to live under the fear of the Lord, because He is a holy and awesome God! Deliberate, continual sin is very dangerous and can lead to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and the loss of our eternal salvation. If we think that we can use repentance as an excuse to sin, we may lose the desire to repent and before long, our hearts will be far away from God.

6. There are the consequences of sin. Repentance will result in forgiveness but not necessarily set us free from the consequences of sin. For example, God may forgive a murderer, but he will still have to go to jail. We read about Esau in **Hebrews 12:16-17**. God forgave him, but he could no longer inherit the blessing, even when he repented. We have the example of King David. Although God forgave him for his sin with Bathsheba, his sin affected his family relationships after that. Sin may not affect our eternal destiny but it can affect our calling and ministry.

7. Public confession can break the power of sin: In **James 5:16** we read, “*Confess your faults to one another that you may be healed.*” Public confession of sin is an act of humility and the Bible says, God gives grace to the humble. I once went forward in a meeting to confess publicly to a group of people a weak area of my life. After that, I noticed a freedom from that bondage. However, we must be careful to whom we confess our sins, especially when we do so before the opposite sex. We often get healed from sin in a certain area of our lives, when we confess that sin before people.

8. It is important that our repentance is complete and deep. It is good, not only to repent of our sins before God, but also to repent of all its consequences. For example when we sin, we have not only disobeyed the word of God but we have also, grieved the Holy Spirit, we have given a

foothold to the devil, we have offended others, we did not fear the Lord, and our hearts have become cold. When we consider all the consequences of our sin, it often releases great grace to have victory over that sin.

**Finally: 2 Corinthians 7:11.** *"For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."* These are some of the benefits of repentance. There is new zeal, new freedom, a new release of grace to overcome the sin and a new hunger and desire for the things of God.

Repentance is the doorway into the kingdom of God. It will enable us to grow spiritually and experience more and more of God's grace and power. Jesus said, *"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* **Amen**

## **6. The Doctrine of the Cross**

The most powerful and important doctrine in the whole Bible, is the Doctrine of the Cross. It is the foundation of our Christian faith. In **1 Corinthians 1:18** we read, *"That the message of the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* This message has the power to set us free from sin and completely change our lives.

The message of the cross is based on the principle that **life comes out of death**. Jesus said in **John 12:24**, *"Unless a corn falls to the ground and dies it abides alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit."* We have many examples in the Bible. The first example of this principle is the creation of the world. When God created the earth we read that each day started in the evening and ended in the morning. First darkness then comes light. Death and darkness are often grouped together (see John 1). God moves from death and darkness into life and light.

We have the example of Moses who spent forty years in the wilderness, before he could lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Abraham had to be willing to offer his son as a sacrifice before he could become the father of many nations. We have many other examples such as Joseph, David and even Paul in the New Testament.

The greatest example is Jesus. He had to die and suffer on the cross before He could be raised from the dead and become Savior of the world. The same is true with us. We have to die to ourselves in order to experience the resurrection life of Jesus, we have to go down in order to go up, we have to give in order to receive and we have to serve before we can lead.

### **There are four sides to the message of the cross.**

The first side to the doctrine of the cross is the exchange that took place at the cross:

It is our faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross for us. Consider the following scriptures. **2 Corinthians 5:21**: "*For He made Him sin who knew no sin, that we may become the righteousness of God through Him.*" Jesus took our sin on the cross and gave us His righteousness. We are righteous today, not because of our deeds, but because of our faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross.

**Galatians 3: 13-14**, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us ... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles.*" Every curse that was legally ours, because of our deeds and the deeds of our ancestors, was placed on Jesus on the cross. In exchange all the blessings that God promised to Abraham, have now become our legally because of the cross. In **Genesis 24:1** we read that "*God blessed Abraham in all things.*" Therefore in **Ephesians 1:3** we read that "*God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.*" We are blessed, not because we earned the blessing, but because we believe in what Jesus did for us on the cross. God blessed us 2000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross for us. Therefore we do not have to ask God to bless us, we only need to receive by faith that what Jesus has already given to us. He therefore took our curse and gave us His blessing.

**Matthew 8:17**. "*He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.*" In **1 Peter 2:24** it says, that "*By His stripes we were healed.*" Jesus carried all our sicknesses and infirmities on the cross and gave us His health. Therefore we do not even have to ask God to heal us. We only need to receive by faith, that what Jesus gave us 2000 years ago on the cross. In **Matthew 15:26**, Jesus said that healing is the children's bread. If we are children of God through faith in Jesus, then healing belongs to us! He therefore took our sicknesses and gave us His healing and health.

**Ephesians 2:5.** *“When we were dead in our trespasses and sins, He made us alive together with Christ.”* Every aspect of our dead sinful natures was carried by Jesus on the cross. In exchange He gave us His new resurrection life. We are spiritually alive, not because we have done anything, but because we believed in Jesus and what He did on the cross for us. He carried our death and gave us His life.

There are many other exchanges that took place on the cross. He took our sorrows and gave us His joy. He took our torment and gave us His peace. He took our rejection and gave us His acceptance etc.

The second side to the doctrine of the cross is our identification with Jesus on the cross.

This means that what Jesus went through on the cross, becomes our experience. In **Galatians 2:20** Paul says, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.”* Paul is saying here, that when Jesus died on the cross, it was as if he died with Christ. In **Romans 6:6** he says *“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...”* Our old nature has died with Christ on the cross. How do we know this? It is not because we feel it or even experience it, but because the word of God says so. Furthermore, **verse 7** it says, *“For he who has died is free from sin.”* What a blessing! Dead people cannot sin, they are free.

Let me give you an illustration. Once upon a time there was this family, a husband and wife and two daughters. The husband was a very evil man and used to beat up his family and swear at them, This was even worse, when they went to church. Every time they would return from church he would throw a temper tantrum, swear at them and beat them up. He was a drunkard, he smoked heavily and was addicted to pornography on the television.

However, one day this completely changed. They returned from church and noticed a huge difference. As they entered the house, everything was quiet and peaceful. They were not greeted with swearing and insults. He did not even hit them. He was sitting quietly in his chair but was no longer looking at pornography on the television. There was a glass of whiskey next to his chair but he had not touched it. He had completely changed! What happened? He died! Dead people are free from sin!

Therefore, God has provided a wonderful door of deliverance for us and if we go through this door, we will be completely free from sin. This door is called

death. That is why Paul says in **Romans 6:11** "*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" The cross is the most powerful weapon we have against sin. Every time the devil tries to tempt us, we can just simply say, "*I am dead to this, you have no power over my life.*" Paul says in **Galatians 6:14** "*God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world.*"

The third side to the doctrine of the cross, is the revelation of what Jesus experienced on the cross for us.

As we appreciate how much Jesus suffered for us on the cross, our hearts will become soft and open to God and it will increase our love and desire for Him. **Mark 15:15**, says, "*He delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.*" They tied Jesus to a pole and two Roman soldiers whipped him. In Jewish tradition they could only give thirty nine stripes. But there was no limit in Roman tradition. Often the people who were whipped died. Jesus was beaten over and over to the point of death. In **1 Peter 2:24** it says "*by his stripes we were healed.*" The Greek word for stripes is the word "molopes" which means stripe. There were no stripes, because there was no skin left on His back. There was just one big stripe! Another translation says, "One quivering, pulsating mass of flesh." We need to think about what happened at that whipping post and realize that he did it for us!

**Mark 15:16-19:** "*Then the soldiers led Him away to a hall called the Praetorium and they called together a whole garrison.(A garrison is 600 soldiers) And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns (huge sharp thorns) and put it on His head...(Verse 19) And they struck Him on the head. (Another translation says "They hit Him on the head over and over until they were tired of hitting Him") and spat on Him...*" Can you imagine 600 cruel soldiers spitting on Jesus and hitting Him? They put a crown of sharp thorns on His head and hit Him on His head, over and over. The thorns would have gone into his skull and His head would have swollen to double its size. In **Isaiah 52:14** it says that "*His visage was marred more than any man.*" The people did not recognize Him. We need to stop and look at that chair, and realize that He did this for us.

**In Mark 15:20** we read "*They led Him out to crucify Him.*" There is much we can say about crucifixion. Crucifixion originated with the Persians but the Romans perfected the method of crucifixion. It was to create the maximum pain over the longest period of time and was the cruelest and the most painful

way to die. On average, it took 2 to 4 days before the victim would die. The nails were not driven through the palm of the hands, but through an open space in the wrists, called the "space of destart." The main nerve that connects our arm to our brain goes through this space. The thick nail would pierce this nerve and cause pain beyond description, medical experts say the pain was like lightning, hitting the brain.

They also put a nail through His feet, which is one of the most sensitive parts of the body. We need to think about those nails! In **Colossians 2:14** it says that God nailed our sins to the cross. We need to thank Jesus for the cross. We must never forget how much He suffered for us. The Father also placed all our sins on Him, therefore, He did not only suffer in His physical body, but He also experienced all our horrible sins. The most unimaginable darkness and torment came over His soul. He hung on that cross for three long hours before He died. Therefore, the revelation of what Jesus did for us on the cross for us should change our lives and soften our hearts. If Jesus did this for us, then there should be no price too great to pay in order to follow Jesus.

The fourth side to the cross is the continual experience of dying to self as a way of life.

This is called the way of the cross. Jesus said in **Luke 9:23-26**. *"If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."* What does this mean for us today?

- It means we make a total surrender of our lives to Jesus. That we acknowledge Him to be Lord over every area of our lives. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:15**. *"He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."*

- It means that we are not ashamed to tell others about Jesus and bear His reproach, even if we are rejected and persecuted for our faith. In **Luke 9:26** Jesus says, *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."* In **Acts 5:40** we read, *"So they (the apostles) departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."* One of the ways that we continually die to self, is that we are not ashamed to tell others about Jesus.

- It means that we are humble enough to submit to God and to those God places over us in authority, even if it is difficult. Submission to others is a form

of dying to self. When we submit to others, it means that we are also humble enough to take rebuke and correction. In **Proverbs 1:23** we read, "*Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.*"

- Dying to self also means that we have the right attitude and reaction when we go through various trials and experiences. We have the example of Paul and Silas in prison in **Acts chapter 16**. They were severely beaten for their faith and in **verse 25** we read, "*But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*" To die to self means that instead of complaining we bless and praise. Instead of giving up even when it looks so negative, we continue to hope and believe. Instead of being angry, we humble ourselves and forgive. Instead of demanding our rights, we forgive and serve. It is not so important what happens to us, but how we react!

**Finally** to die to self means that we obey God even if it is very difficult: We have the example of Abraham who was prepared to offer up his only son Isaac. In **Genesis 22:16-18** we read, "*By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants ... In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*"

There is no limit to how much God will bless us and others through us if we apply the principles of the cross to our lives. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 4:12**, "*Death is working in us, and life in you.*" As we die to self and put God first, then God will use us to influence many people through us. The "*Message of the cross, is the power of God to us who are being saved.*" **Amen.**

## **1.6. How to experience the grace of God:**

Grace is one of the most important and the most misunderstood doctrines in the Church. In reaction to legalism, some have taken this doctrine to the extreme and many have been deceived and led into error. Before we study this important doctrine we need to understand some very important truths about grace.

First of all, grace is not there to cover sin or to give us a license to sin, but it is God's ability to empower us to live righteously. In Romans we read, "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God*

*forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"(Romans 6:1-2) Grace does not cover sin, but empowers righteousness!*

Secondly, even though we live under grace, we do not have the right to ignore the commands in the Bible, especially the commands given by Jesus. Even though the New Covenant commenced when Jesus rose from the dead, He told His disciples in the Great Commission to *"teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you."* (**Matthew 28:19**) Obedience to the word of God will always be important. Grace does not excuse us from the moral obligations of the law, (for example, you shall not steal, commit adultery, etc) but from the outward actions to justify ourselves before God. We will not go to heaven because we keep the commandments, or because we are good people, but because we believe in Jesus and what He has done on the cross for us.

Thirdly, even though we live under grace we will still need to confess and repent of our sins. We read, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (**1 John 1:9**) Some have argued that this verse is for unbelievers and not for Christians. However, notice the word, 'we'. It does not say 'they'! The Bible also says, *Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed."* (**James 5:16**) Furthermore, we read that *"godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation."*(**2 Corinthians 7:10**) Repentance is one of the ways that we humble ourselves before God and the Bible says that God *"gives grace to the humble."* (**James 4:8**)

Fourthly, many argue that because of grace we cannot lose our salvation. In other words, once saved always saved and just because we once received Jesus and prayed the sinner's prayer, we will go to heaven no matter how we live. However, there are many verses in the Bible that contradict this argument. For example, we find this phrase in that Jesus said in the book of Revelations, *"He that overcomes... I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life."* (**Revelations 3:5**) This implies that our names can be blotted out of the book of life! The Bible also says, *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."* (**2 Peter 2:20**) We also read in **Hebrews 3:12**, *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."* This verse implies that we can depart from the living God. There are many other verses in the Bible that warn us that we can lose our salvation.

### What is grace?.

Firstly, grace is God's divine ability: This ability gives us the power to live the new life in Christ. Grace gives us, that what God requires from us. **Titus**

**2:11-12** says, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*"

The first example of grace in the Bible is found in the garden of Eden, when God said to Adam and Eve. We read, "*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion ....*" (**Genesis 1:28**) We notice that God first blessed them, then He told them to be fruitful and multiply.

They did not have to do something to be blessed, but from a position of blessing they received the ability to do something. This is grace! The same applies to us, we do not have to do something in order to be blessed, for the Bible says God "*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*" (**Ephesians 1:3**) Even if we feel that we are weak and far away from God, we can still be blessed because of God's grace. In fact, when we woke up this morning, we woke up with God's blessing and favor. This did not depend on our prayers or our performance!

Secondly, grace is a divine influence on our hearts that gives us the willingness to do what God wants us to do. **Philippians 2:13**, "*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" Not only does God tell us what to do, but He works in our hearts to make us willing to do so. Legalism says, if we are obedient, God will bless us. Grace says, because I am blessed, I have the desire to be obedient to God. We do not do things because we have to do them, but because we want to do them. I do not pray, because I must pray, but because I want to pray. Furthermore, we do not only want to do things for Jesus, but we enjoy doing things for Him. We pray because we enjoy praying, etc.

Thirdly, grace is the unmerited, undeserved and unearned favor and kindness of God. The Bible says, "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" (**Romans 3:24**) Again we see that grace gives us something that is free. Therefore, if it is free, then we cannot earn it! The word grace in the New Testament, comes from the Greek word, "*charis*" which has a cultural and Biblical meaning. In fact, the Biblical meaning comes from its cultural meaning and means, '*a benevolent gift from a superior to an inferior.*'

It is a gift from someone who has resources, to someone who needs resources. In the Greek culture, there were three people involved in this transaction. First of all, the patron, the person who supplies the goods. Then we have the client, who is the person who needs the resources. Thirdly we have the broker, which is the person who brings the patron and the client together and who also pays for the resources.

In the Kingdom of God, the Father is the Patron, He has all the supply. We are the client, who have the needs. Jesus is the Broker, One who reconciles us to the Father and who also pays the price so that we could receive what the Father has for us, including the eternal life.

When Jesus dies for us on the cross, His final words were, "it is finished." In the original language this means, "I have paid the price in full!" If Jesus paid the full price, this means that we do not have to pay anything and there is nothing we can do to deserve anything from God. The only reason why we receive anything from God, is because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us. If we think we have to do something to earn something from God, we are then saying that the price He paid on the cross was not good enough for God!

The Bible says in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" Everything we receive is by grace through faith. Grace is what God does, faith is what we do. We receive by faith that what God gives us by grace. *This does not only apply to salvation, but to every area of our lives. God heals us because of His grace and not because we deserve it.*

### **How do we receive the grace of God?:**

Although we cannot earn the grace of God, there are means by which we can receive and experience the grace of God. The Bible says in **Romans 5:17b** "*Those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Christ Jesus.*" Therefore we need to know **how** to receive the grace of God

The first source is the word of God: We read in **Acts 20:32**, "*So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*" When we read, meditate and confess the word of God, grace is released into our lives. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:12 that the word of God is "alive and quick..." The word quick, come from the Greek word, "*energes.*" Therefore, supernatural, divine energy flows into our lives when we read, meditate and confess the word of God. The more we do so, the more we will experience the grace of God!

The second source is the Holy Spirit: In **Hebrews 10:29**, the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Grace." In **Acts 1:8** it says, "*You shall receive power when the Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses ...*" We read in **Galatians 5:16**, "*Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.*" Legalism says, "if you avoid the desires of the flesh, you will be in the Spirit. This is the wrong side of the cross! Grace says, if you walk in the Spirit,

you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. The Holy Spirit will take those desires away, when we walk in the Spirit! As we continually allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and we are dependent on the Holy Spirit, we will have victory over the desires of the flesh.

The third source of grace is the Body of Christ, the church: It is our relationship with other believers. God has placed gifts, ministries and resource in the church to bless us. We read in **Acts 4:32-33**, "*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; .... And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.*" In **Psalms 92:13-14**, "*Those who are planted in the house of the Lord Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing.*" God's resources are often in the church. That is why we need to be part of an alive and vibrant church. (**See also Psalm 36:8**)

The fourth source of grace is humility and repentance: The Bible says in **1 Peter 5:5**, "*God gives grace to the humble...*" We read in **Isaiah 57:15**, "*I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*" Repentance is one of the ways that we humble ourselves before God. We read in **2 Corinthians 7:11**. "*For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!*" When they repented there was a new zeal, new freedom, a new release of grace to overcome the sin and a new hunger and desire for the things of God. If we have weaknesses and sins and repent deeply of them, we release grace to overcome those weaknesses. (E.g. anger, lust, etc.)

The fifth source of grace is our dependence of God and His grace: God gives grace to those who acknowledge that they need God's grace. Jesus said in **John 15:5**, "*Without Me you can do nothing.*" Often God will wait for us to come to the end of our own abilities and efforts before He releases His grace. When He does so, we will give Him all the glory. In **Matthew 5:3** we read that "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.*" The poor in spirit are those who realize that they have a need. Many have fallen from the grace of God through pride and self-confidence.

God also said to Paul in **2 Corinthians 12:9**, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" *Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" Furthermore, it is not only our dependence on God that is important, but we also need to be humble enough to receive from others. God often uses others to be His channel of grace towards us!

The sixth source of grace, is the throne of Grace: We can always approach God in prayer and ask Him to give us grace when we need it. We read in **Hebrews 4:16**, "*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" Notice we can come boldly, without shame or condemnation. This is because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us

The seventh source of grace, is the life of Jesus in us. In **2 Peter 1:2-3** we read "*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*" As we spend time in His presence, in prayer, worship and reading the Bible, we will experience more and more of His grace

The Bible says in **John 1:14** that when Jesus came, "*He was full of grace and truth.*" (**John 1:14**) He is our source of grace. Not only that, but the Bible also says that "*Christ lives in us*" (**Galatians 2:20**) If this is so, then the greatest source of grace, is the very life of Jesus that is in us, living in our born-again spirit man. Therefore, Jesus is not only our Lord and Savior, He is everything to us. The Bible says that "*we are complete in Him.*" (**Colossians 2:10**) If we need peace, He is our peace, if we need joy, He is our joy, if we need healing, He is our healing, etc. As we believe and receive this wonderful truth, we will experience His grace working in us and through us! (Testimony)

**Results of Grace:** (How do we know that we are living under grace?)

1. We will have victory in our Christian lives: We have already read in **Romans 5:17**, "*... those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*" Our ability to receive the grace of God, is one of the greatest keys to victory. "*The shall reign in life!*" We have a wonderful promise in **2 Corinthians 9:8**, "*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*"

2. It will be easy to serve and obey God. In **Matthew 11:30**, Jesus said, "*My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" If we ever find that it is a heavy burden and difficult to live for Jesus, it means that we are probably not living under grace but under law. The grace that saved us, is also the grace that will continually empower us and keep us. Paul speaks about his own ministry and life in **1 Corinthians 15:10**, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all,*

*yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" Grace is like spiritual fuel that gives us the energy to do what God wants us to do.

3. We will focus on the heart and the inner life: Grace does not focus on outward things such as behavior, what we eat, what we drink and on the clothes that we wear. and not on outward things: In **Romans 14:17** we read, "*The Kingdom of God is not eat or drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*" The grace of God will change our inner live, which in turn will affect our outer behavior. God said to Samuel in **1 Samuel 16:7**, "*But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have [a]refused him. For[b] the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*"

4. There will be joy in our lives: Jesus said in **John 17:3**, "*But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. .*" Those who live by grace usually are relaxed and joyful. They love to sing, rejoice, laugh, smile and be happy. On the other hand, those who live under the law are usually sad, serious and have very little joy. Joy is often the manifestation of God's grace.

5. Our lives begin to change without any effort: Jesus said, "*Whoever abides in Me and I in Him bears much fruit.*" (**John 15:53**) We will not try so hard to be spiritual, but we will grow spiritually, automatically. Furthermore, we will not even be aware that we are growing spiritually even though others will notice it. The Bible says that God works "*in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.*" (**Philippians 2:13**)

6. We will be motivated by the love and gratitude. The Bible says, "*we love Him because He first loved us.*" (**1 John 4:10**) We do things for Him because we love Him. Paul said "*For the love of Christ compels us.*" (**2 Corinthians 5:14**) It is easy to do things for those whom we love and for those whom we know love us. For example, when a boy falls in love with a girl, he will do anything for her. In the same way, when we fall in love with Jesus, we will do anything to please Him.

Finally, there is no limit to what God can do in us, for us and through us when we live under the grace of God, we will be so blessed. **2 Corinthians 13:13**, "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the [a] communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*" Amen.

## **8. The Fear of the Lord:**

The fear of the Lord is very important, however, we seldom hear people preach about it. There are more than 300 references to the fear of the Lord in the Bible. The two most important themes that occur throughout the whole Bible is firstly, the grace of God and secondly, the fear of God. It is like a train running on two tracks, grace and the fear of God. When we think about grace, we also think about subjects relating to grace such as, the love of God, God's favor and God's goodness.

If we keep a good balance between the grace of God, and the fear of God we put ourselves in a position to experience the blessings of God. Jim Backer, a famous Christian television producer was thrown in jail because of financial compromise in his business. When someone asked him why he did these things he said, "my problem was not that I did not love God, but my problem was that I did not fear Him.

We have the example of King David when he tried to bring the Ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem. You know what happened, Uzzah touched the Ark, and God killed him. We read, "*And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?*" (**2 Samuel 6:9-10**) David always loved the Lord, but he needed learn about the fear of the Lord before he could bring the ark back to Jerusalem. In the same way, in order to reach our spiritual goals, we must not only love God, but we must also fear Him. The ark also speaks of the glory and the presence of God. Therefore, this is also important if we want to experience God's presence.

In the New Testament we read. "*...and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*" (**Acts 9:31**) The comfort of the Holy Spirit is about experiencing the love and the grace of God. However, when they also feared the Lord, "*the church was multiplied!*" There was fruitfulness in their ministry and they could achieve their goals.

### **What is the Fear of the Lord?**

In the New Testament, the Greek word in most cases is the word "phobos" which means fear, to be reverend, respectful, to show honor and respect etc. For example, in we read that we must serve the Lord "*with fear and trembling.*" (**Philippians 2:12**) To the unbeliever or backslider, the fear of the Lord means: To fear, to be frightened, to be terrified and to be afraid that God will judge and punish him. Jesus said, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" (**Matthew 10:28**)

However, to the believer and those who want to follow Jesus, the fear of the Lord means, reverence, to show respect, to be careful and to stand in awe. It is not a fear of punishment or hell because Jesus carried our punishment on the cross and gave us the gift of eternal life. However, it is the fear that we can lose God's favor, His blessing and calling. Furthermore, is also a fear that we can jeopardize our eternal rewards. Moses said in Exodus, "*Do not fear (be frightened); for God has come to test you, and that His fear ( reverence, fear) may be before you, so that you may not sin.*" (**Exodus 20:20**)

### **How do we know that we are living in the fear of the Lord?**

Firstly we will be serious about holiness. The Bible says "*Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.*" (**2 Corinthians 7:1**) To do this means that we will not hide our sins and failures, but we will be quick to repent and acknowledge our sins before God. We will also be careful never to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we will be serious about obedience: Obedience is a manifestation of the fear of the Lord. We have the example of Abraham when God appeared to him and told him to offer up his son Isaac. We know what happened! As he was about to kill his son, the angel stopped him and said, "*for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*" (**Genesis 22:12**) God knows that we fear Him when we obey Him. Those that fear the Lord will be quick to obey His word. Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commands.*" (**John 14:15**)

In Proverbs we read, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.*" (**Proverbs 8:13**) We love what God loves and we hate what He hates. He hates pride and He hates it when we speak evil words. He also hates conflict, bitterness, rebellion, etc. He loves obedience, forgiveness, generosity and when we tell others about Jesus. We read in Isaiah, "*But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.*" (**Isaiah 66:2**) If we fear the Lord we will regard the Bible as the word of God, as if God Himself is speaking to us. We will take every word that we read seriously.

Thirdly, we will show respect to God when we are in His presence: It does not mean that we cannot enjoy His presence and make a noise, but in our hearts we show Him great respect. We will be focused on Him and not distracted with other things. In Psalms read, "*Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*" (**Psalms 2:11**) Even when we praise and rejoice, we realize that we are standing before a mighty and holy God. **Psalms 89:7** says, "*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him.*" We must not only love Him, but fear Him. If we read further, it says, "*and to be held in reverence by all those who are*

*around Him.*" Those that want to be around Him, those that want to draw close to God must hold Him in reverence. God wants to draw near to us, but there is a condition, He will only do so if we show Him reverence!

In Leviticus we read how Nadab and Abihu died in the presence of God because they offered "profane fire". The word profane means "lack of reverence." Moses explains why this happened. *"This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.'*" *"So Aaron held his peace."* (**Leviticus 10:3**) This not only happened in the Old Testament, but also in Acts chapter five to Ananias and Sapphira!

Solomon gave us this important advice *"Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore, let your words be few."* (**Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**) When we worship, pray or spend time with God, we must show Him the deepest respect.

There are two things that will motivate us, or help us live in the fear of the Lord.

Firstly, we must have a correct perspective of eternity: Although we are saved by faith in Jesus, we will be rewarded in eternity according to our works. What we do on earth will affect us for the whole of eternity. For the Born-again believer, the issue is not where he will spend eternity, but how he will spend eternity! There are many scriptures that speak about the judgment seat of Christ and that we will be judged according to our works. We read in Romans, *"We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ ... So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God."* (**Romans 14:10,12**) This will be the most important event in our lives. Notice it says "we all"! That includes you and me!

We also read in the Corinthians, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."* (**2 Corinthians 5:10-11**) When we realize that our actions on earth will affect our eternal existence, we will be motivated to live in the fear of the Lord. Therefore, if we live in the fear of the Lord, we will live with purpose and use every opportunity to make an eternal investment. Peter gave us this serious warning when he wrote: *"And as you*

*call upon the Father, who without partiality judges each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout your time of sojourning here with fear;" (1 Peter 1:17)*

Secondly, we must be aware that God knows everything and sees everything: The Bible says, "... *there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*" (**Hebrews 4:13**) God knows all our thoughts, sees everything we do and hears everything that we say. For example, if we traveling on a road and we are aware that a traffic policeman is watching us, we will be careful how we drive! In the same way, God is watching everything we do. He sees us in public, in private and knows all the thoughts that we think! Someone is watching us!

When we are aware that everything we do and think is shown on a big screen in God's heavenly office, we will be very careful how we live. We read about this in Psalms, "*The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.*" (**Psalms 11:4**) If we know that God knows everything, and we cannot hide anything from Him, we will know that it is important that we confess our sins and repent. In the book of Acts, we read how Ananias and Sapphira thought that they could hide things from God. They tried to impress people and lied to the Holy Spirit and died. They did not realize that God was watching them! We read further that "... *great fear came upon all the church.... and believers were increasingly added to the Lord.*" (**Acts 5:11&14**) There was a revival because the Christians feared the Lord.

God listens to all the words that we speak, Jesus said, "... *that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*" (**Matthew 12:36**) He not only hears our words, but He knows our thoughts and motives. The Bible says that, "... *God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*" (**Romans 2:16**) Therefore God will not only judge our deeds, but also our thoughts and motives.

This also has a positive side, in Malachi we read, "*Then those who feared the Lord spoke (often) to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate (or think) on His name.*" (**Malachi 3:16**) Every time we turn our hearts towards God in love and commitment, it will be remembered in eternity. If we live under the fear of the Lord, we will live with the awareness that God is watching us!

To finish off this study, we need to look at the results and benefits of the fear of the Lord. In Isaiah, we read that the "*fear of the Lord is His treasure.*" (**Isaiah 33:6**) When we live in the fear of the Lord we will discover that God

has wonderful things prepared for us. It is like opening a treasure chest. The Bible says that "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" (**1 Corinthians 2:9**)

Let us look at some amazing scriptures:

"*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" (**Proverbs 1:7**) Wisdom will give us the ability to make the right decisions and know the will of God. When we live under the fear of the Lord, we will make good choices and be successful in our lives.

"*Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth." (**Psalms 25:12 -13**) God not only teaches and instructs those who live under the fear of the Lord, but their lives will be prosperous on the earth!*

"*The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.*" We can also read this verse like this: "*The secret (intimate, sweet satisfying companionship) is with those who fear (worship and show Him reverence). He will show him His covenant.*" (**Psalms 25:14**) Our hunger for God and our fear of God takes us all the way into His presence.

"*Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.*" (**Proverbs 3:7-8**) The fear of the Lord will even affect our health.

"*In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence.*" (**Proverbs 14:26**) The fear of the Lord gives us boldness. It will deliver us from all other ungodly forms of fear. When we fear the Lord, we will have also boldness to tell others about Jesus.

"*The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.*" (**Proverbs 19:23**) What a wonderful promise! Jesus said the He has come to give us life and life abundantly. "*He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.*" (**Psalms 145:19**) "*The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy.*" (**Psalms 147:11**) There are so many more wonderful promises to those who live under the fear of the Lord.

Finally we can "*chose the fear of the Lord.*" (**Proverbs 1:29**) As Christians we can make a choice to fear the Lord, for "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" (**Proverbs 1:7**)

## **9. Eternal Rewards**

William Booth the founder of the Salvation Army had a vision where he died and went to heaven. In heaven he was greeted by a number of people that asked him whether he had told their relatives about Jesus. When he said that he had not, they walked away saddened. He then saw Jesus approaching him with a group of people whom he realised were heroes of the faith. These were those who accomplished great things on earth and who were now enjoying a wonderful relationship with Jesus in heaven.

When Jesus walked up to him, he noticed that He was not smiling but had a sad expression of His face. Jesus told him that he had made it to heaven, but would not feel at home there because he had not totally followed Him on earth. Jesus then said to him that he could go back to earth and gave him another opportunity to make an eternal investment with his life. He returned to earth and started the Salvation Army, which led thousands of people to Christ. For the remainder of his life, he lived a life of total commitment to Jesus and became a zealous soul winner.

I heard of another pastor, who had a vision of the judgement seat of Christ. He saw a pile of wood in front of him. Jesus came up to him with a torch and set the wood on fire. There was a sudden blaze and when the fire had subsided, all that was left was ash. He had nothing to show for his life on earth worthy of heavenly rewards and felt so ashamed. He was saved from hell, but he was bankrupt in heaven.

The issue of eternal rewards is an important theme that occurs throughout the whole New Testament. There are also references to it in the Old Testament. Jesus gave many parables about heaven and the importance of being prepared to go there. The most important event that will ever take place in our lives, is the day that we stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our lives on earth. For some it will be a wonderful day of rejoicing, for others it will be a day of regret.

Our life is like a race which begins, the day when we accepted Jesus as Lord. The race track are the opportunities that God gives us on earth. The finishing line is the day we die, and the prize giving will take place on the day we stand before the Judgment seat of Christ in eternity. Paul referred to that event as 'that day or the day.' This was so important to Paul that he wrote, "*I press*

*toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"  
**(Philippians 3:14)**

We read in the New Testament, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" **(Ephesians 2:8-9)** Although we are saved by faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross, we will be rewarded according to our works that we have done on earth. Faith will get us into heaven, but what happens to us in heaven will depend on what we do with our lives on earth. The issue for us as believers is not where we will spend eternity, but how we will spend our lives in eternity.

The Bible says, "*... we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*" **(Romans 14:10,12)** Notice the words "we all" and "every one of us." The word for judgment seat is the Greek word 'bema' which is not a judgment to punish us for our sins, but a place where rewards are given. We will all give an account and be rewarded according to what we have done with our opportunities, resources and talents that God has given us. That is why it is so important to "*redeem the time and make the most of every opportunity.*" While we are on earth. **(Ephesians 5:16)**

There is another verse that says, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;*" **(2 Corinthians 5:10)** Again, the Greek word 'bema' is used. It says in this verse, "we all" and "every one," which refers to Christians and not to unbelievers. We will receive according to what we have done, and not only according to what we believe while living in our bodies, on earth.

The next verse says, "*Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men...*" **(2 Corinthians 5:11)** The word "terror" is the Greek word "Phobus" which means fear. If we know that we will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we will live in the fear of the Lord. **1 Peter 1:17** says, "*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*"

Let's look at another important verse which is found in **1 Corinthians 3:11-15** says, "*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the*

*day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abides which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."*

This is a frightening passage! It is possible for a Born-Again Christian who has received Jesus as Savior, to die and suffer loss. The apostle John confirms this truth, "*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*" (1 **John 2:28**) This verse implies that it is possible to be ashamed before Him at His coming. That is why it is so important to abide in Christ, have an intimate relationship with Him and obey His word.

I do not want to go into detail about the meaning of gold, silver and precious stones. These are costly materials that can endure the fire. Firstly, it could speak about the price we pay to follow Jesus. Jesus said, "*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*" (Luke 14:33) It means that we have totally surrendered all to Christ and put Him first in every area of our lives. Secondly, it speaks about doing something for Jesus that will have a lasting value on earth. Jesus said that we should bare fruit that remains, fruit that has eternal value. (John 15:16)

For example, when we lead people to Christ, it is an eternal investment. Paul said, "*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*" (1 **Thessalonians 2:19**) Jesus also said, "*... he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life...*" (John 4:36) When we influence people for Christ, help the poor, or plant churches, we are making eternal investments. We need to ask ourselves the question, "*what am I doing today, that will last forever?*"

### **Six things that will affect our eternal rewards:**

(1) When we are not ashamed to tell others about Jesus and make a stand for Him. There are so many verse that speak about this. We have already read in **John 4:36** "*And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life...*" They that lead souls to Christ, make an eternal investment. Jesus also said that if we confess Him before men He will confess us before His Father and holy angels. (**Matthew 10:31**) We must not only tell others about Jesus but also be willing to bear His reproach. We read in the book of Mark, "*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*"

**(Mark 8:38)** There are wonderful rewards for those who are persecuted for their faith. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:11-12** " *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*"

(2) When we are faithful with our finances. Jesus said in **Luke 16:11**, Jesus said, " *If you have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will give you true riches.*" If we have been faithful with our finances on earth, God will reward us with true riches in heaven. We need to be faithful with our tithes, offerings and giving. Generosity on earth will be an important issue in heaven. Jesus said to a rich young ruler, " *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*" (**Matthew 19:21**) What we do with our possessions and money on earth, will determine our riches in heaven! Our love for Jesus must be greater than our love for money, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. It is important that our finances are in order. The Bible says, " *Owe no man anything, but to love one another.*" (**Romans 13:8**) We must make an attempt to pay back money that we owe, pay our taxes and return the money that we have stolen. Paul gave us a warning and wrote that " *thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" (**1 Corinthians 6:10**)

(3) When our relationships must be in order. This is a big subject but we are commanded to love one another, receive one another and forgive those one another. Jesus said, " *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (**Matthew 6:14-15**) It could be possible to enter into eternity only to find out that God has not forgiven us! There are probably many today, who thought they were going to heaven, but because of un-forgiveness, they landed up in hell! Our relationships with the church are important, especially the way we relate to those in spiritual authority. The Bible says, " *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*" (**Hebrews 13:17**) This implies that the joyful account of those who rule over us will be "profitable" for us in eternity.

(4) When we are living in obedience and holiness: We have a serious warning, " *Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord.*" (**Hebrews 12:14**) If we do not take holiness and right relationships seriously on earth, we may be in danger of not seeing the Lord

in eternity. Holiness is the beautiful life of Jesus in us and is manifested through our thoughts, words and actions. Holiness means that we are free from sexual impurity and unclean behavior. This does not mean that we are perfect, or that we will never sin again, but we make holiness and purity a high priority in our lives. We are warned, "... *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.*" (**1 Corinthians 6:9**) We cannot deliberately continue in these sins and expect to go to heaven! Our obedience to the will of God on earth will affect our lives in heaven.

Jesus said, "*Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.*" (**Matthew 7:22**) A well-known preacher once had a vision of a huge multitude of people who thought they were going to heaven but were turned away at the gates of heaven. He remembered seeing the shock and dismay on their faces. They called Him '*Lord, Lord*' but did not do the will of the Father!

(5) When our love for God and our relationship with Him is important: The next verse says "*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (**Matthew 7:23**) The word, 'know' is the word, 'to know intimately.' The degree that we love Jesus on earth, will determine our closeness to Him in heaven. One of my favorite verses is found in **Malachi 3:16-17**, "*Then they that feared the LORD spoke one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;*"

Our words and thoughts of love for the Lord are recorded in a book, called the Book of Remembrance. What is written in this book will be revealed in eternity. Notice, that God calls these people, His jewels! Every time we pour our hearts before the Lord in worship, love and adoration, a record is kept in eternity. Paul wrote to Timothy and said that there was a crown of righteousness for those who love His appearing. (**2 Timothy 4:8**)

(6) When we have the right reaction to the trials we go through on earth: There are many verses that speak about this in the New Testament. Paul says that "*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*" (**2 Corinthians 4:17**) In other

words, when we go through various trials and we have godly reactions, we will be rewarded in eternity. Instead of being bitter, we forgive, instead of complaining we rejoice and instead of being discouraged, we believe. The Bible says, "*Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*" (**James 1:2**) In the book of Hebrews we read about those who were joyfully experiencing the plundering of their goods, who would have a better and enduring possession in heaven. (**Hebrews 10:34**) If we pass the difficult tests that we go through on earth, we will be greatly rewarded in heaven. We will one day reign with Jesus in eternity, our training on earth is preparation for reigning.

### What are the rewards in heaven?

The Bible does not give us much information about these. I suggest the following:

- We will be rewarded with levels of authority. It says in Revelations that there will be those who reign with Jesus for a thousand years. (**Revelations 20:6**) Jesus spoke about those who are faithful on earth will one day reign over cities. (Luke 19:17)

- We will be rewarded with joy. There may be levels of joy in eternity. Jesus speaks about the parable of the talents and said to those who were faithful, "*enter into the joy of the Lord.*" (Matthew 25:23) This could mean that there will be levels of joy and fulfillment in heaven.

- We will be rewarded with a wonderful relationship with Jesus. I believe that there will be varying degree of closeness to the Lord in eternity. In the book of Revelations we read that there will be those who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were called the first fruits to God. (**Revelations 14:4**) Our relationship with Him on earth will determine our relationship with Him in eternity. If we do not love Him here, how will we love Him there?

- We will be rewarded with privileges and benefits. These may apply to where we will live in heaven. One man had a vision of heaven and said, God showed him that there were three levels in heaven. These can be compared to the Tabernacle in the wilderness which the Bible says is a pattern of heaven. (**Hebrews 8:5**) The outer court is the lowest level but the biggest section of the Tabernacle. He said that this is still a wonderful place, and most people will be going there. However, they will not experience frequent visits from the Lord. The Holy place is even more glorious, and fewer will go

there. In the Holy place there is a greater level of God's presence. The highest level is likened unto the Holiest of all. This is where the throne of God is found. Paul spoke about being caught up to the third heaven. **(2 Corinthians 12:1)**

This could be speculation, but we also read in Hebrews that there were those who chose to go through hardship on earth so that they could have a better resurrection. **(Hebrews 11:35)** Whether or not his vision was from God, or not, I firmly believe that our works on earth will affect our standard of living in eternity.

### **Finally:**

There may be many other issues that will be important at the judgment seat of Christ and will affect our eternal rewards. When we read the life of Paul, we notice that his whole focus was on eternity. He was running a race on earth to one day stand in heaven to receive a reward. His final words to Timothy were, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* **(1 Tim 4:8)**

Paul was ready to die and be with the Lord. He had finished his course and had done everything that God called him to do. Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. **(1 Corinthians 9:25)** Therefore he says in the previous verse, "run in such a way to obtain it!" **(1 Corinthians 9:24)**

If we read church history, we notice that the early believers were so eternity focused that many willingly gave their lives for Jesus. The question we need to ask ourselves is, *"are we ready to die? Or do we have some unfinished business still to do?"* Jesus said, *"... behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."* **(Revelation 22:12)** We should be living in such a way, that we are ready to die at any moment, but we plan our lives as if we will still live for another twenty years.

A famous missionary, Jim Elliot who was martyred for his faith in South America said, *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, in order to receive that what he cannot lose."* Therefore, let us redeem the time and make the most of every opportunity. **Amen**

