

NEW START BIBLE MINISTRIES



SIXTEEN DEADLY DEVICES

OF

SATAN

by

PAULL R OOST [Dip Theo]

APRIL 2002

HOW CAN I BE SAVED?

Salvation is available for all members of the human race.

There is no question but that salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation it neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

How do I become a Christian?

There is but one simple step divided into three parts.

First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5 :24).

Realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (I Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

The results of Salvation

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful.
My sins are taken away (John 1:29)
I possess eternal life now (I John 5:11,12),
I become a new creature in Christ [2 Corinthians 5:17),
The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (I Corinthians 6:19)
And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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THE LIMITATIONS OF SATAN.

As shown by the typical cartoon concept, most of the world today pictures Satan as a medieval and mythical 2-horned, fork-tailed impish creature, dressed in red flannel underwear, busily pitching coal into the furnaces of hell. Some time ago an article was published entitled, *"If I Were the Devil."* Let me briefly quote from it:-

"If I were the devil, the first thing I would do is to deny my own existence! "I would deny my existence in the world and downplay it in the local church, thus freeing me to go about my business unheeded, unhindered and unchecked!"

It might surprise some to know that some time ago a national secular magazine took a poll of some 5000 American clergymen and discovered that a full 73% ridiculed the concept of a personal devil of any sort!! Satan's existence is doubted, denied, or downplayed in the world of men, but quite the opposite is true in the Word of God!!

Satan is mentioned in 7 Old Testament books:- Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Job (12 times), Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. He is to be found in 19 New Testament books, and is referred to by every New Testament writer. He is mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ some 15 times. This devious approach to deny his existence is, of course, the absolute opposite of that used by God Who desires, perhaps above all else, to be fully believed in!!

Hebrews 11:6:- *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* But this is NOT so with Satan!! This disciple of doubt seems to thrive best when he is either underestimated, ignored or denied.

Suppose there is a Bible-believing church which is going through a spiritual crisis. For some months many diverse problems have occurred. The attendance and offerings are also down and the members are becoming restless. Finally, and in desperation, a special committee is appointed by the congregation to discover the source of this coldness and lifelessness. After considerable prayer and deep soul searching, the committee submits its report. What are its findings?

I believe it may be safely assumed that the average committee would lay the blame on one or more of the following:- the pastor; certain officials; a cold congregation; or a difficult neighbourhood.

But what fact-finding group would return the following indictment? "We believe the main source of our heartaches for the past few months is SATANIC!! We believe the reason our church is experiencing these problems is due to an all-out attack on our church by Satan, and, or, demons!!" "We dose our report with a strong recommendation that the congregation call a special meeting, rebuke Satan, plead the blood of Christ and claim the victory?"

As one compiles and analyses the many biblical passages on Satan and demons, it becomes evident that he is the most powerful creature in all of God's universe. SATAN'S grand plan is to expand the boundaries of his kingdom to include the planet earth and its inhabitants. When man fell, Satan expanded the realm of his rulership subject to the sovereign control of God.

SATAN is the most intelligent being ever created by the hand of God and he is NOT without a highly sophisticated organization and a powerful system of governance. Satan's system is described in the Bible by the Greek word *"cosmos"*. This word is found in the New Testament 187 times and is translated "world". The word *cosmos* means order, regularity, disposition, and arrangement. The *cosmos* is a vast order or system that Satan has promoted, which conforms to HIS ideals, aims, and methods.

It is a civilization now functioning apart from God!! A civilization in which none of its promoters really expect God to share, A civilization who assign to God no consideration in respect to their projects;

Nor do they ascribe any causitivity to Him. This system eagerly accepts its own godless governments, - conflicts, armaments, - jealousies, - its education, - culture, - religions of morality, - and pride. It is that sphere in which man lives. It is what he sees, and what he employs. To the uncounted multitude on earth, it is ALL they ever know so long as they live on this planet.

Every person ever born is born into Satan's cosmos!!! Every person is blinded by the cosmos system UNTIL they receive correct teaching of God's grace system especially with regard to salvation and the true spiritual life. The realization that this world is wholly evil is impossible for fallen man to comprehend apart from Scripture and the teaching and illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It is properly named the "satanic system" a phrase is in many instances a justified interpretation of the ever so-meaningful word, *"cosmos"*. It is literally a *cosmos diabolicus* and is described as such by Theologians such as Lewis S. Chafer. Remember, that Satan himself has never created anything!! And in spite of all his power and genius, he is still a creature and NOT the Creator.

Because of this blessed truth, his power and knowledge are limited. Let's now consider the restrictions of this deadly enemy of our souls:-

Satan is not omnipresent. The devil cannot be in China, Perth, and Sydney at the same time. However, this is not by any means to say that believers in those areas cannot be tempted at the same instant, - for Satan has literally millions of fallen angels to do his bidding, - thus extending his ministry universally.

Satan is not omnipotent. While he is still the strongest and most powerful creature in the universe, his power compared to God's is like a pathetic ant pitted against a mighty elephant!!

Satan is not omniscient. The devil has, admittedly, acquired an immense amount of knowledge by simply being around during the last 6,000 years but he is totally ignorant of many things known by the most humble and uneducated believer. He knows nothing of God's love, His mercy, His grace, and His forgiveness. SATAN does not know the future, nor all the secrets of the past.

The question is often asked concerning Satan's reported wisdom and amazing Bible-reading habits. "If he has indeed read the Word of God, then doesn't he know his doom is sealed, and that the lake of fire will be his eternal imprisonment?" He is indeed aware of these prophecies, but it must be kept in mind that according to Ezekiel 28:17, SIN has CORRUPTED the wisdom of Satan to the point where he STILL thinks he can defeat God!!! "Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour."

Sometimes the most clever criminal is a psychopathic killer. Satan – The great Counterfeiter: We must beware of Satan's counterfeits.

He has counterfeit Christians (2 Cor. 11:26)
who believe a counterfeit Gospel. (Gal. 1:6-9).
He encourages a counterfeit righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3),
He even has a counterfeit church. (Rev. 2:9).
At the end of the age, he will produce a counterfeit Christ!! (2 Thes. 2:1-12).

Because he is a subtle foe, we must always "be vigilant" and always on guard. His strategy is to counterfeit whatever God does. According to the Parable of the Tares, wherever God plants a true Christian, Satan seeks to plant a counterfeit!! (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

You may not be aware that Satan's evil system ALSO counterfeits the good in God's system. By advocating much truth, in the form of a counterfeit system of truth, Satan can satisfy all the external religious cravings of the world, and yet accomplish his own end by withholding that on which man's only hope depends. - God's grace plan of salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross!!

He would deceive US TOO were it not for the Word of God and the Spirit of God. (1 John 2:18-27).

The better we know God's Word, the keener our spiritual senses will be to detect Satan at work. We must be able to "test the spirits" and know the true from the false.

1 John 4:1-3:- *"many false prophets are now in the world. So, don't believe every spirit. Test the spirits to see whether they are from God. 2. This is how you can recognize God's Spirit: One Spirit says, 'I believe that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus came to earth and became a human being.' That Spirit is from God. 3. Another spirit refuses to say this about Jesus. That spirit is not from God. This is the spirit of the enemy of Christ."*

Crossing the Line: In our Christian walk, we cross a line - I call it the "obedience line" - that sets off every alarm in Satan's kingdom. The moment you cross that line into a life of obedience and dependence on Jesus Christ, determined in your heart never to go back, you become a threat to the kingdom of darkness and a target of principalities and powers. The testimony of every believer who turns to the Lord with all his heart - hungering after holiness and a deeper walk with Jesus will meet with the sudden breaking forth of strange and intense troubles, trials, and testings!!

Let's suppose that you were once a "part-time" disciple. You did love the Lord, but you were spiritually lazy. You weren't an avid student of the Bible, nor inclined to spiritual things. You didn't really want to get too deeply involved, especially as things in your life were going quite smoothly. Satan, or his demons didn't bother with you much because you were just a fence-straddler.

But now, you're all business for God. His Word has come alive to you - and you pray, you weep, you love lost souls. Everything has changed, including your previous trouble free lifestyle!! What a great heart-change you've experienced! Yet, at the same time you've made waves in the unseen world of demons!! - You have drawn attention to yourself. You've crossed the obedience line - and are now a prime target for the enemy!! You now realise that you are engaged in a full scale, relentless invisible war!!

Mind Games: Some Christians let the enemy sow evil thoughts in their minds, and then let the thoughts linger, doing nothing about them, not realizing the danger. God's Word says that Christians are to cast down such thoughts as soon as they appear in their minds. Christian life very much involves utilising the principles outlined in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5:- *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5. casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"*

SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

What are these weapons that we are to use in this spiritual warfare.?

Faith in the living God, consistent prayer and obedience to the Word of God are the effective weapons of every true soldier of Jesus Christ. A successful campaign can be waged in the spiritual realm ONLY when worldly weapons are abandoned, and total reliance is placed on "spiritual" weapons which can demolish impregnable fortresses where evil is entrenched. This not only applies to Satan's "*kingdom daibolicus*" but, it also applies to the human MIND, also!!!

Evil thoughts can become strongholds in the MIND. Satan or demons plant the thought when they are allowed to influence the thought processes of the MIND. They endeavour to keep the evil thought alive and protect it until it conceives and becomes a full grown serpent. To coddle and entertain evil thoughts is to hatch a snake!!

Isaiah said something quite similar in Isaiah 59:4-5:-*"they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks out."* They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity."

God says pull it down, cast it out, bring every single thought into captivity. Let not a single EVIL thought be allowed to roam at will in your mind. Go after that thought, capture it, and kill it.

Have you ever wondered why so many who get delivered from this problem go back to their old habits? Why is the grip of sin not broken? Because when evil thoughts are later once again planted by lying spirits, they are NOT immediately cast down. They are entertained and flirted with, instead of being taken captive unto obedience to Jesus Christ!! Let a single lustful thought STAY in the mind for even 30 seconds, and it WILL take hold. Soon it becomes an egg, with a snake waiting to be hatched.

Listen to James' confirmation of this matter in James 1:14-16:- *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.16. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."*

Instead of expelling the vile thought, a believer may encourage, nourish and enjoy it!! This act of acquiescence is likened to sexual intercourse!! This lust is said to conceive and then a hideous, destructive baby called SIN is born!! Which is another way of saying that IF we think about a forbidden act long enough, we will eventually DO it!!!

You know, the whole process of LUST conceiving and bringing forth SIN is vividly illustrated in the incident of David and Bathsheba found in 2 Samuel 11:1-27. That is why God's Word literally screams out at all those who have ears to listen, *"Cast out the wicked thought!! KILL IT!! GET RID OF IT NOW!! – BEFORE IT DESTROYS YOU!!* Don't flirt with the thought; don't give it an inch. Run to the Lord; - run to His Word; Cry out for a cleansing of the MIND.

Let the reverential fear of grieving our awesome God drive out every evil thought immediately they rear their ugly heads. Be persuaded that IF the thought is entertained, - IF it is conceived and becomes an egg, it will hatch and the MIND will be bitten, poisoned, and polluted. As soon as any evil thought comes to mind, the Christian must say:- "This thought, if I flirt with it, has the capacity to really harm me and to cause irreparable damage not only to myself, - but to my loved ones and to other people around me!!

The Christian must realize, "This thought is NOT from my NEW nature in Christ!! It can only come from my own lower creature nature, OR, it could even have demonic origins!! In any case, my Heavenly Father has commanded me to "PUT IT TO DEATH IMMEDIATELY." Colossians 3:5:-"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

The Bible promises, -*"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7). You must resist him in your MIND by resisting the FIRST thought of evil.

What are these fortified positions that crumble before the spiritual weapons of the Holy Spirit.? (2 Corinthians 10:4) They are men's secular teachings and speculations, including the vain reasonings of many scientists, evolutionists and philosophers, -

ALL that *"exalts itself against the knowledge of God,"* (verse 5) You know, there are ironclad promises from God, together with absolute assurances that no evil THOUGHT need conceive in any Christian and become a poisonous snake.

Isaiah 26:3:- *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*

Romans 12:2:- *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

1 Peter 1:13:- *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

The familiar sign "Prayer changes things" is not always true. BUT, prayer DOES change US, by protecting against those matters which were driving us to despair!!

The Christian's Victory Over Satan.

The word "nikao" is found 28 times in the Greek New Testament, and is almost always translated by the word "overcome." There are 3 important verses in which this word is used:-

John 16:33:- *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

1 John 4:4:- *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

Revelation 21:7:- *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."*

These verses clearly promise the child of God final total victory over his enemy, the devil.

ASSESSING THE CONFLICT

But how does the Christian experience this promised victory? He does it by keeping the same fundamental facts in mind that any would-be victor would, whether in the secular or spiritual battlefield. Here then are four fundamental facts:

- A. He must know his own weaknesses.
- B. He must know his own strength.
- C. He must know the weakness of his enemy.
- D. He must know the strength of his enemy.

To either overestimate or underestimate in any of these four areas could prove to be a fatal error.

Let us now examine these four facts the victor must be aware of:-

A. THE WEAKNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN.

John 15:5-6:- *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."*

In these verses, Jesus likens Christians to branches. Now, we all know that a branch abides in a vine by drawing ALL of its life and nourishment from the vine. Likewise, as Christians, we abide in Christ by spending time in prayer, reading and obeying His Word, and by having fellowship with His people. By doing these things, we maintain constant contact with Him, and we are conscious of His abiding IN us and supplying us with spiritual strength and resources.

It's obvious that the branch can only bear fruit as long as it abides in the vine. And the only way that believers can bear the fruit of a Christ-like character is by living in touch with Christ moment by moment. Jesus Himself is the Vine; and you and I are vine branches. It's not a question of the branch living its life for the Vine, but simply of letting the LIFE of the VINE flow out through the branches.

Sometimes we pray, "Lord, help me to live my life for you." It would be better for us to pray:- "Lord Jesus, I want You to live out YOUR life through ME." Without Christ, we can do nothing that has any eternal value or significance.!!!

A vine branch has one great purpose – to bear fruit!! It is useless for making furniture, or for building homes. But it is good for fruit bearing ... as long as it abides in the Vine.!!!

Likewise, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ must remain in obedience to Him in order to bear fruit. Like most new believers, when I was first saved, I felt the Christian life was a 50/50 proposition. That is to say, I would carry my 50% of the load, and God would assume the remaining half. But, to my dismay, I kept falling short of my part of the arrangement.

I then suggested to God that we alter the proportions whereby He would carry 60% and I would be responsible for the remaining 40%. But, alas, this also proved unworkable for me!! So, I figured, a 70/30 agreement would certainly work. But even with that, - again, failure!! Finally, after some years as a believer, I sometimes think I have things down to a 98/2 arrangement. I am still tempted sometimes to feel that I surely, by now, must be able to carry on at least 2% of the Master's work by myself. There simply has to be something I can perform in the flesh for God.

But Jesus has clearly said, *"for without Me you can do nothing."* In Romans 7:18, Paul refers to this very thing:- *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find."*

Sin is a terrible master, and it finds a willing servant in the human body. We should understand that the body itself is not sinful; - the body is neutral. It can be controlled either by sin or by God.

But man's fallen lower creature nature, which is still with us even AFTER our salvation, gives SIN a beachhead from which it can attack and then control us if we ALLOW it. Your MIND controls your BODY, and your WILL controls your MIND. Many people think they can control their will by "willpower," but usually they fail.

(This was Paul's experience as recorded in Romans 7:15-21). *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

It is only when we yield our will to God that His power can take over and give us the willpower (and the won't power!) that we need to be victorious Christians. And one way that we surrender our wills to God is through disciplined prayer. As we spend time in prayer, we must surrender our will to God and pray the prayer that Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

Our motto must be:- God's will – nothing more, - nothing less, nothing else, - at any cost!! We must pray about everything, and at the same time, be prepared to let God have His way in everything. So then, the first basic fact a Christian must be aware of to assure victory over Satan is to be aware of his own weakness, - and to be aware of his total dependence on God!!

B. THE STRENGTH OF THE CHRISTIAN.

This is the second vital principle to be observed in guaranteeing spiritual success. What, though, is our chief strength? The answer is:- Galatians 2:20:- *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

The believer is identified with Christ in His death. Not only was Jesus crucified on Calvary, I was crucified there as well. - IN Him!! This means the end of me as a sinner in God's sight. It means the end of me as a person desperately trying to earn my own salvation through good works!! It means the end of me as a child of Adam under the condemnation of the Law!!

I am now a new creature in Christ!! Christ who restored all that Adam lost!! The Saviour didn't die for me so that I could go on living my life any way that I choose!! He died for me so that from now on He might be able to live HIS life through me!!

Philippians 4:13:- *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

"I can, - through Christ...but I can't through self!!

C. THE WEAKNESS OF SATAN.

Thirdly, we must fully understand the weakness of our enemy.

According to the Scriptures, Satan is powerless in the following areas:-

(A) He cannot tempt a believer except by God's permission. This is brought out vividly in Job 1:8-12. *Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" 9. So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10. "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11. "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12. So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.*

It should be noted here that in verse 10 Satan actually told the EXACT truth, for God had indeed made a hedge about Job. Thus, when a child of God is being subjected to some fiery temptation or trial, he should keep the following 3 thrilling truths in mind:-

Firstly, God knows exactly how much his child can bear. *"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."* (Psalm 103:14).

Secondly, he will not allow Satan to go beyond this breaking point:- 1 Corinthians 10:13:-*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

God does not promise to deliver us from temptation or testing, but He does promise to LIMIT its intensity. He further promises to provide a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it!!

Thirdly, he only allows the temptation in the first place to strengthen and purify us. In Genesis 50, Joseph reviewed with his brothers their former act of treachery in selling him into Egyptian slavery. Joseph concluded:- *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."* (Genesis 50:20).

James and Peter also affirm this third principle .James 1:1-4:- 1. *"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. 2. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3. knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4. But let patience have full play, that you may be (people) perfectly and fully developed, lacking in nothing."*

James 1:12:- *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."*

1 Peter 1:6, 7:- *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7. that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"*

Another weakness that Satan has is that he cannot stand to be resisted. James 4:7:- *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

But how does one go about resisting the devil? James answers this—by submitting first to God. This means that we must be subject to Him; - Ready to listen to Him and obey Him; We must be humble and contrite – NOT proud and stiff necked!! We must get serious with our Christian lives and not simply be 2-hour a week Christians!! We must remember God's stern warning that He will not be mocked!! We will most certainly reap what we sow in this life!!

When we actually get serious about these things, then we will be able to resist the devil!! Ephesians 4:26-27:- *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."*

Unconfessed sins of temper provide Satan with a foothold or a base of operations from which to work against us. He is capable of finding plenty of these himself without our deliberately helping him!! Satan enjoys a lively debate (like the one he carried on with Eve in Genesis 3), but he cannot tolerate being resisted.

The Christian can also successfully resist the devil if he does the following:

Firstly, he must know HOW the devil attacks. Paul warns of this. 2 Corinthians 2:11:- *"lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."*

But what are his devices?

Later on in this study we will consider the 16 deadly devices of the devil. However, for now, let's look at another way that the Christian can successfully resist the devil.

He must stand guard and be alert in anticipation of Satan's attack. We see this in 1 Peter 5:8:- *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* To be sober means to be serious-minded, - to take a realistic approach to life, - to be intelligent regarding the strategies of Satan.

Remember that Satan has different poses. Sometimes he comes like a SNAKE, seeking to lure people into moral corruption. Sometimes, he disguises himself as an angel of light, attempting to deceive people in the spiritual realm. However, in 1 Peter 5:8, he comes as a roaring LION bent on terrorising God's people through persecution.

Thirdly, the believer must have on the proper protection when Satan attacks. Ephesians 6:10-17:- *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15. and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16. above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"* In one sense, the "whole armour of God" in Ephesians 6 is a PICTURE of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 14: Christ is the Truth. John 14:6:- *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

He is our righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21:- *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Look at verse 15: He is our peace. Ephesians 2:14:- *"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us,"*

Look at verse 16:- His faithfulness makes possible our faith. Galatians 2:20:- *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

Look at verse 17: He is our salvation. Luke 2:30:- *"for my eyes have seen Your salvation"*

Finally, He is the Word of God. John 1:1,14:- *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

This means that when we trusted Christ, we RECEIVED the armour.

In Romans 13:11-14, Paul told the Romans what to DO with the armour:- 11, *"now it is high time to awake out of sleep."* 12, *"cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."* 13, *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy.* How do we do this?? 14, *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts."* By faith, we must put on the whole armour and trust God for the victory.

When King David put off his armour and returned to his palace, he was in greater danger than when he was on the raging battlefield. (2 Samuel 11).

Because, we are never out of reach of Satan's devices, so we must never be without the whole armour of God. We cannot fight in a spiritual war without spiritual weapons!!

The Apostle Paul, of course, spent the last part of his ministry in a Roman prison. (Acts 28). Doubtless he had many opportunities to watch his Roman guards put on their full battle armour. As the book of Ephesians was written during this time, it seems very probable that the Holy Spirit led Paul to take each piece of armour and apply it to the Christian fight against Satan.

It has often been observed that Paul lists NO armour protection piece for the back parts. The reason is obvious, of course. The Roman soldier was never expected to turn his back to the enemy.

Yet another of Satan's weaknesses is that he cannot stand the blood of Christ, nor the positive testimony of the Christian. *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."* (Rev. 12:11).

D. THE STRENGTH OF SATAN.

This is the fourth and final principle one must grasp to assure victory.

We need to be well aware of the strong points of Satan.

The following list could well be called "The Sixteen Deadly devices, or, "Ds" of Satan."

1. DISAPPOINTMENT.

Who has not experienced this emotion literally hundreds of times? But to the knowledgeable Christian ALL disappointments are simply God's appointments, and they must be viewed as such, lest Satan gain the advantage.

Maybe you thought your goal as a Christian was to escape disappointments. Maybe you thought that as a Christian you wouldn't have any disappointments. But, God's plan for you is maturity in Jesus Christ.

His plan is for you to become the person He designed you to be. And disappointments just happen to be one of the primary stepping-stones on that pathway!! Every Christian is going to have to deal with many disappointments in life.

People will disappoint us. (even friends) Circumstances in life will disappoint us. We will disappoint ourselves through our own bad choices and decisions in life. And Sin will most certainly disappoint us.

We have to decide whether we deal with disappointments God's way, OR whether we hand them over to Satan as tools and weapons to be used against us. And believe me, use them he will!!

To be disappointed is to totally forget the glorious truth of Romans 8:28:- *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Now, it may not always seem to you that God is working all things together for good.

Sometimes when we are suffering heart-break, tragedy, disappointment, frustration and bereavement, we wonder what good can come out of it. But the following verse 29 gives the answer:- *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,"*

When we understand this wonderful truth, it takes the question mark out of our prayers!! We begin to see the bigger picture as God sees it. We begin to understand that our lives as God's children are not controlled by impersonal forces such as chance, luck, or fate Our lives are closely controlled by our wonderful, caring and personal Lord who is too loving to be unkind, and too wise to err!!!

Whatever God has permitted to come into our lives is specifically designed to progressively conform us to the image of His dear Son. God has written in His Word, a formula for success over disappointments. He also supplies the power to you when in faith you handle your disappointments by using this formula.

God says, "do it My way and you will share My JOY!! And you will grow stronger, And you will glorify your God and Saviour!!

Satan, the counterfeiter says, "Do it my way and share what I have."" But what does he have, except misery, failure, and the Lake of Fire awaiting him.??

These wonderful truths regarding our new identity in Christ should be more than enough for us to deal with our disappointments in life!! View your disappointments as opportunities, or, stepping stones toward spiritual maturity in Christ!!

2. DISCOURAGEMENT.

Discouragement is the second stage of disappointment. ALL discouragement stems from Satan, the world and from our old sin natures.

An amusing event from church history is reported concerning the great reformer, Martin Luther. For days he had been in the valley of discouragement. The pope was trying to kill him. Some of his friends had shunned him.

Suddenly he noticed his Godly wife coming downstairs dressed in black as if in mourning. *"Woman, where are you going?"* he asked. *"To a funeral, husband,"* she replied. *"Oh, but who died?"* he said. *"God did,"* she softly answered.

With that, the great reformer exploded with righteous indignation. It wasn't enough that the pope was trying to kill him, but now he must deal with blasphemy in his own household. *"Woman, who told you such a thing?"* he demanded.

Looking him straight in the eye (as only a wife can do) she said: *"You did, Martin!! The way you've been acting the past few weeks, I was sure you had somehow found out that God was dead!"* At that point Luther knelt and asked both God and his wife to forgive him for his discouragement.

To be discouraged is to forget 1 Samuel 30:6:-*Then David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God."*

While David had been marching North with the armies of the Philistines the Amalekites had raided Ziklag and had taken the women and children captive.

Thus, when David finally returned, he found only the smouldering remains of his city. Was this possibly a judgement from God upon him for joining the Philistines.?

If so, David showed his great insight into the character of God, because he immediately went to Him for comfort when everything and everyone was against him. David knew that there was no-one to turn to for strength in such an overwhelming crisis, except the Lord!!

Of whom it is said in Hosea 6:1- *"Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up."*

Let us all follow David's example and take our discouragement to the Lord in prayer. Don't remain in discouragement mode, otherwise you will be playing right into Satan's hands!!

Why not listen to our Saviour's gentle invitation in Matthew 11:28-30:-*"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Jesus has promised that if we will trust Him and come to Him with our discouragements, He will give us rest.

3. DESPAIR.

Despair is the third and final stage of disappointment and discouragement. Unless checked it can prove fatal to the Christian life.

To despair is to forget the message in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9:- *"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9: persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."*

1st Peter 1:4 & 5 tells us that believers have *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5. who are kept by the power of God through faith...."* Believers are NOT kept by their OWN power, but by the power of God.

Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards us and guides us. We are NOT kept by our strength, but by His faithfulness.

How long will He guard us? Until Jesus Christ returns at which time we will share in the full revelation of His great salvation.

Isn't it encouraging to know that we are "guarded for glory." According to Romans 8:30, we have ALREADY been glorified. All that awaits is the public revelation of this glory. (Rom. 8:18-23).

Now, if any believer could be lost, it would rob God of His glory!! God is so certain that we will be in Heaven with Him that He has already given us His glory in Christ as the assurance.

John 17:20-22:- *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21. "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22. "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one."*

The assurance of our future permanent residency in Heaven should be a great motivational help to us today, - and whenever we may feel despair.

As Dr. James M. Gray expressed it in one of his songs:- *"Who can mind the journey, when the road leads HOME?"* If suffering today means eternal glory tomorrow, then suffering becomes a blessing to us.

The unsaved have their so-called "glory" NOW in mortal bodies on earth, and if they continue to reject Jesus as their Saviour, a terrible fate awaits them.

2 Thessalonians. 1:7-9 tells us that the time is coming:- *"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8. in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"*

Now THAT is real despair!!

In the light of all this, the Christian should consider their true identity and destiny in Jesus Christ, and then, any despair should give way to blessed assurance, confidence and joy!!

4. DOUBT.

Satan used this deadly device for the first time in the Garden of Eden. He began his attack upon Eve by causing her to doubt the Word of God. Genesis 3:1:- *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, `You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

In James 1:6, James compares the doubting believer to the waves of the sea, - UP one minute and DOWN the next. This is the unhappy experience of the "double-minded man who is unstable in ALL his ways." (James 1:8)

Faith says, "Yes!" - but unbelief says, "No!" Then doubt comes along and says "Yes!" one minute - and "No!" the next. It was doubt that made Peter sink in the waves as he was walking toward Jesus. (Matt. 14:22-33).

Jesus asked him, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt.??* It's important to note that when Peter started his walk of faith, he kept his eyes firmly fixed on Christ. But when he was distracted by the wind and waves, he ceased to walk by faith; and he began to sink.

Frantically, Peter cried out, *"Lord, save me!!* The Lord took him by the hand, gently rebuked his doubting, and brought him to the boat. You know, the Christian life, - just like walking on water, is humanly impossible. It can only be lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As long as we focus on Jesus and look away from every other distraction, we can experience a supernatural way of life.

But the minute that we take our focus off Christ and become occupied with ourselves, - our circumstances, - other people, - or things in life, we begin to sink...!! Peter was double-minded, and he almost drowned.!!

Many Christians live like corks on the waves: - up one minute, - down the next; tossed back and forth. This kind of experience is evidence of immaturity.

Paul used a similar idea in Ephesians 4:14:- *"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive,"*

If we have believing and united hearts, we can ask in faith and God will give us the wisdom that we need.

Have you noticed that instability and immaturity go together.? Usually, unstable people are somewhat immature.

To doubt is to forget 1 Timothy 2:8:- *"Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;"*

5. DISBELIEF.

Disbelief is but the FINAL form of doubt. This was vividly demonstrated in the garden of Eden.

As we have already noted, Satan began by doubting God's Word in Genesis 3:1.

He then finished (when he realized he had Eve's ear) by denying the command of the Lord. Genesis 3:4,5. *"And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." .*

One of the central themes of chapter 6 of Mark's Gospel is the unbelief of people who came into contact with Jesus Christ. All of these people had every reason to trust Jesus Christ, yet ALL of them failed to do so, including His own disciples.!!

To disbelieve God is to forget the powerful message of Hebrews 3:7-12:- 7. *"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8. do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9. where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. 10. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' 11. So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' " 12. Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;"*

God had delivered His people from Egypt and had lovingly cared for them, revealing His power in many signs and wonders. Israel saw all of this and benefited from it, but the experience did not bring them closer to God nor make them trust Him more.

All that God did for them did not benefit them spiritually. In fact, just the opposite took place. They hardened their hearts against God! They put God to the test and though He did NOT fail them; YET they failed Him. It is well said that the heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.

With the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, the people of Israel erred in their hearts by allowing their hearts and their focus to wander away from God and from His Word.

They also had evil hearts of unbelief in that they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.!!

Their failure to correct a constant habit of grumbling, murmuring and unbelief toward God led over a million Israelites to such a hardened state of heart that they were unable to lay hold of the opportunity to enter the land of promise when they came to its borders.

They procrastinated from entering the promised land of their inheritance because they doubted and disbelieved the promises of God.

At times, God tells us to test His promises, but He never tells us to test His commands.!! So the principle is: Test God's promises and obey His commands.!!

But the wilderness generation would not do this.!! They had reached a serious stage of unbelief that had tested the patience of God Himself.!! *"We are not able"* wept the 10 spies and the people. *"We are able with God's help.!!"* said Moses, Joshua and Caleb. Because the people went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith, they missed their inheritance and died in the wilderness.

During the following 4 decades, then, Israel was to linger in the desert until the last person 20 years and older died and was buried. As I have said on a previous occasion, figuring on 1.2 million people, (600,000 men and 600,000 women) as having to die in 14,508 days, (38.5 years) gives 85 deaths per day. Figuring 12 hours per day maximum for funerals, gives an average of 7 funerals per hour for all 38.5 years, a continuous grim reminder of God's punishment upon them. So, they perished at an average of 85 deaths a day, until the generation that left Egypt (except for Joshua and Caleb) had died out.

For 40 years Caleb and Joshua watched their friends and relatives die.; All because of their sin of disbelief!! But those two men of faith who trusted in God and in His promises, had complete confidence in God's Word that they would one day enter Canaan.

When a person has an erring heart and a disbelieving heart, the end result will inevitably be a hard heart. This is a heart that is insensitive to the Word and work of God. So hard was the heart of Israel that the people even wanted to return to Egypt!! Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt!

You know, this is exactly what a Christian does when after being redeemed from the slave market of sin, they harden their hearts against God and return to their former lifestyles.

6. DISTRACTION.

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about great conspiracies. Schemes purportedly aimed at destroying both democracy and Christianity throughout the world.

These strategies have included:- The Trilateral Commission, Communism, the New Age movement, Secular Humanism, The Illuminati and cults.

Yet, I believe none of these conspiracies has ever troubled the heart of God. With just one tiny whiff of His divine breath, He could blow them all into oblivion!

There is however, one major conspiracy that concerns our heavenly Father – a scheme aimed directly at Christians who have set their hearts on entering into the fullness of Christ. It is a satanic conspiracy meant to thwart God's plan of raising up an army of sanctified people -- men and women totally devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. There Is Rampant Today a demonic Conspiracy of interruptions.

Now, I'm certainly not going to tell you that demons are involved in ALL of the interruptions that we face each day.; However, it is true that Satan and demons are terrified of Christians who hunger and thirst after righteousness.; and who have made a conscious commitment to serve the Living God, their Heavenly Father.

Indeed, Satan fears praying saints more than he fears a thousand years in chains!! ALL of Satan's kingdom quivers and quakes at the effectual, fervent prayer of a single believer. And every demonic principality seated in high places cowers upon hearing the cries of a weeping, broken-hearted child of God. The powerful praying of just ONE faithful prayer warrior sounds like raging thunder in the caverns of HADES!!

And there is NOT one inch of space in Hades that isn't affected by a believer who denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Christ with his whole heart. Yet, we must be aware of a very important fact:- The soul that cries out with agonizing yearnings for depth in Christ will become the central focus of Satan's conspiracy of interruptions!

A pastor from another country once said, "I must be like many other ministers. My greatest battle is not with some secret sin of the flesh -- but with maintaining a consistent life of prayer and study in God's Word!! "Satan rarely tempts me with sexual sin. But he has found one thing that works on me time after time. He gets me so busy with the daily affairs of life that my prayer and study time are crowded out! "Now, I don't allow this to happen intentionally. In fact, I always renew my efforts to get into my room for prayer But I'm soon caught up again in all kinds of projects and interruptions. And this cycle is repeated over and over. Satan is robbing me of my time with My Heavenly Father!!"

Like millions of other sincere Christians, this dear pastor is the victim of a demonic conspiracy of interruptions. And the devil's chief target in these attacks is the secret room of prayer! He knows it is the door into the Holy of Holies -- the armoury out of which saints emerge in full battle dress, ready to withstand all of Satan's fiery darts.

So, how does the devil keep believers out of this fearsome, secret room of prayer? Does he parade erotic images through their minds? Does he tempt them with soothing thoughts of escape through alcohol or drugs? Does he lure them with dreams of fame and prosperity?

Actually, No, not so often!!

The devil knows that the person who is truly following Christ will not be so easily tempted by any such vulgarity. And the truth is, these obvious temptations are NOT necessary for him to accomplish his work. Instead, the old fox seeks to interrupt a believer's every attempt to enter the presence of God in prayer. He uses every device in hell to hinder that

Christian's efforts to spend time in prayer and in the study of God's Word! On top of his list is the television set, videos, movies, etc because through these, he can kill several birds with the one stone.

Firstly, he can brainwash them with false values, false standards, and false propaganda. Remember the principle of "G.I.G.O. [garbage in, garbage out]?"

Secondly, he can occupy all of their best time until they are then too tired to pray effectively. Remember, that PRAYER is the Christian's greatest and most effective offensive weapon against Satan and his kingdom diabolicus!!

Thirdly, through the medium of television and videos, demons have a great ally in assisting them to influence a believer's thought processes in the MIND!! This distraction device of Satan and demons can be a very subtle one, for there are other times when the distractions are NOT in themselves BAD. In fact, they may be good and even wholesome.

For example, it is so easy to be distracted from God's perfect will by one's own family or employment. It has been rightly said that often the real enemy of the best is NOT the worst, but the GOOD. Satan subtly distracts many believers by getting them involved with things that on the surface may seem worthwhile. However, anything that distracts a believer from the Written and the Living Word of God is FALSE. – and is NOT from God!!!

To be distracted is to forget Matthew 14:30:- *"But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"*

7. DOUBLE MINDEDNESS.

How many believers have been affected by this dangerous condition!!

The Scriptures are simply full with examples. Consider but a few:-

Matthew 6:24:- *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Jesus taught that materialism will enslave the heart - the mind and the will. It is so easy to become shackled by the material things of life, - when we ought to be liberated and controlled by the Spirit of God. If the believer's heart exclusively loves material things, and puts earthly gain above heavenly investments, - then the result can only be a tragic loss.

The believer will only find real and lasting happiness when he or she uses whatever treasures of earth that they have for God's service. But if we frantically gather material things for ourselves, we will eventually lose them; - and we will lose our hearts with them. Consequently, instead of spiritual enrichment, these people will experience impoverishment.

Matthew 6:19-20:- *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20. "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust (elements of nature) destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

Jesus contravenes all human advice to provide for a financially secure future!! He says that there can be no lasting peace and security in material things on earth. Jesus says that the only safe investments that are never threatened, nor subject to loss are treasures that you lay up in Heaven!!

What does it mean to lay up treasures in heaven? It means to use ALL that we have in the service of God and for the glory of God. It means to "hang loose" when it comes to the material things of life. Don't sacrifice your happiness trying to obtain them!! Be content with what you already have!!

It also means measuring your life by the true riches of the kingdom of God and NOT by the false riches and false values of this world. Jesus taught that wealth can not only enslave the HEART, but can also enslave the MIND.

Matthew 6:22-23:- *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23. "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

God's Word often uses the eye to represent the attitudes of the MIND. Jesus realized that it would be difficult for His followers to see how His unconventional teaching on security for the future could possibly work.

So He used an analogy of the human eye to teach a lesson on spiritual sight. He said that the eye is the lamp of the body. If the eye is good, then the whole body is flooded with light. BUT, if the eye is bad, then vision is impaired and instead of light, there is darkness.

The application is this:- The GOOD eye belongs to the person whose motives are pure, - who has a single desire for God's interests, and who is willing to accept Christ's teachings literally!! He believes Jesus' words, He forsakes earthly riches, He lays up treasures in Heaven, AND, he knows that this is the only, true and long-lasting security!!

On the other hand, the BAD eye belongs to the person who is trying to live for TWO worlds!! He doesn't want to let go of his earthly treasures, yet he wants treasures in Heaven, too!! The teachings of Jesus seem impractical and impossible to him. Therefore, these teachings that he has failed to obey become darkness – a very intense form of spiritual blindness. This person can no longer see riches in their TRUE perspective!!

I'm sure that you will agree that it is most difficult to make progress while trying to look in TWO directions at the same time. If our main aim and goal in life is to get material gain, it will mean darkness within.

BUT, if our outlook is to serve and glorify God, there will be LIGHT within. Materialism can also enslave the will and this is yet another reason that Jesus taught that we cannot serve two masters simultaneously. Either Jesus Christ is our Lord, or through the insatiable desire for money, IT becomes our lord. It is a matter of the WILL - and which one we really love the most!!

1 Timothy 6:9-11:- *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10. For the love (insatiable desire) of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”*

If God grants riches, and we use them for His glory, then riches are a blessing. But if we set our minds only on getting rich, and live with that outlook, we will pay a great price indeed for those riches.

The Lord admonishes us to be wholly devoted to God and single-minded. – NOT double minded!! We cannot love or serve two masters, anymore than we can walk in two directions at one time. If we choose to live SOLELY for money, then we cannot at the same time live for God. And if we choose to live for God, then we will not live solely for money.

Jesus is demanding total devotion to God that puts Him FIRST in everything in our lives. If God is our Master, then money will be our SERVANT, and we will use our resources in the will and plan of God. BUT, IF God is not our Master, then we will become the servants of money, - and money is a terrible master!!

Just look at people who are besotted by money and are fully occupied with it to the exception of everything else. If we copy those people, we will start wasting our lives instead of investing them, and we will one day find ourselves “friendless” as we enter the gates of glory.

Henry Fielding wrote, *“Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil!”* JESUS said, *“Make money your servant and use today's opportunities as investments in tomorrow's dividends.”* Be a wise steward!! There are souls to win to the Saviour, and our money can help get the job done.

Philippians 3:13-14:- *“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; (I am still not all that I should be) but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

“But one thing I do” was the apostle Paul's controlling motive, and it ought to be ours too!! Paul was a man of single purpose. He had ONE aim and ambition. - *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

In this he resembled David, who said in Psalm 27:4: *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord...”*

Speaking of a person who doubts God's goodness and power, James says that such a person *is a double-minded man, unstable in ALL his ways.* (James 1:8).

Ephesians 4:14:- *“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive,”* The maturing Christian is not so easily tossed about by every religious novelty that comes along.

There are many religious quacks in this world waiting to kidnap God's children and get them into their false cults. But the maturing believer recognizes false doctrine and stays well clear of it.

Have you noticed that the cultists do not try to win lost souls to Christ.? They do not establish rescue missions in the slum areas of our cities, because they have NO good news for the person on skid row. Instead, these false teachers focus their attention on immature Christians and try to capture them for their cults.

You may be surprised to know that most of the membership of the false cults comes from local churches, - especially from churches that do NOT feed their people the Word of God!! These immature Christians inevitably meet some false cultist who impress them by their zeal and apparent sincerity. And because these cultists use well known religious words, these immature Christians think that they must be true Christians!!

If only they had studied the Bible for themselves, they would be able to see through this deceitful juggling of words that the cultists cunningly use.

These cultists are actually ministers of Satan in disguise!! The many admonitions Paul gave indicate that Satan is a strong enemy and that we need the power of God to be able to stand against him.

Never underestimate the power of the Satan and demons. He is not compared to a lion and a dragon just for fun!! The Book of Job tells what Satan's power can do to a man's body, home, wealth, and friends.

Jesus calls Satan a thief who comes *"to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."* (John 10:10). Not only is Satan strong, but he is also wise and subtle, and we have to fight against his cunning, crafty arts and strategies. The Christian simply cannot afford to be "ignorant of Satan's devices." (2 Cor. 2:11).

When it suits him, Satan often masquerades as an angel of light and seeks to blind men's minds to the truth of God's Word.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15:- *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

The things that Paul says of these false teachers are still true of false teachers today. One scholar stated that, "Evil, we all know, could never tempt us IF we saw it simply AS IT IS. Disguise is essential to its power. It appeals to man through ideas and hope which he cannot but regard as good."

The apostle Paul has just said that his critics in Corinth posed falsely as apostles of Christ. But he is not surprised at this when he thinks of the tactics of their master. And no wonder!! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light!!

Perhaps by way of illustration we might say that Satan poses as a minister of the Gospel, wearing religious clothing, and standing in the pulpit of a fashionable church. He uses religious words such as, "God," "Jesus," "Hallelujah" and the "Bible." But he completely deludes his hearers, by teaching that salvation can only come from good works, or by human merit. He never preaches redemption solely through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!!

J. N. Darby once stated that Satan is never more satanic than when he carries a Bible!! Since Satan himself poses falsely, is it surprising if his agents do the same??

How do these agents of Satan pose?? As false teachers?? – As atheists?? – As infidels?? The answer is NO!! They pose as legitimate ministers of righteousness. They profess to be ministers of religion!! They pretend that they are leading people in the way of truth and righteousness, when in reality, they are agents of the evil one.

The Word of God says that their *"end will be according to their works."* They destroy – they will be destroyed!! Their treacherous deeds lead men to their doom – they themselves will be led to final doom, too.

You know, the fact that Paul uses the word *"wrestle"* in Ephesians 6:12, indicates that Christians are involved in a hand-to-hand SPIRITUAL battle. It certainly does NOT mean they we are mere spectators at a wrestling match!! This spiritual warfare is not a matter of contending against godless philosophers, crafty priests, Christ-denying cultists, or infidel rulers.

The battle is against demonic forces, against battalions of fallen angels, and against evil spirits who wield tremendous power. Just as we cannot see bacteria with the naked eye, neither can we see demons. Nevertheless, just like bacteria, we are constantly surrounded by wicked spirit beings.

Satan wants to use our external enemy, the world, and our internal enemy, the flesh, to defeat us!! His weapons and battle plans are very formidable.

Ephesians 4:14 says that Christians are NOT to be tumbleweeds that have no roots and are blown about by *"every wind of doctrine."* Nor are they to be "transplants" that are repeatedly moved from soil to soil. Once we are rooted by faith in Christ, there is no need to change the soil!! The roots draw up the nourishment so that the tree can grow. The roots also give strength and stability.

1 John 2:15-17:- *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that is in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. 17. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*

We are plainly warned not to love the world or the things that are IN the world. This is because love for this secular fallen world is not compatible with love for the Father. You see, the world competes for the Father's love in our lives, - but the Word of God enables us to really experience and enjoy the Father's love.

One of the FIRST steps toward a worldly life is the neglect of the Word of God. D.L. Moody wrote in the front of his Bible, *"This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book."*

Just as the pillar of cloud in Exodus 14:20 was darkness to the Egyptians but light to Israel, - so God's Word is OUR light in this dark world. Remember that this fallen world cannot understand nor comprehend the things of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14:- *"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

The wise Christian does NOT waste their time trying to explain God's programme through the ages to unregenerate people. It would be tantamount to casting pearls before swine!! You might as well try to describe a sunset to a permanently blind man, or discuss nuclear physics to a monument in the park!! The *"natural"* unregenerate man simply cannot comprehend such things. One might as well try to catch sunbeams with a fish hook as to lay hold of God's revelation unassisted by the Holy Spirit!!

Unless a person is genuinely born of the Holy Spirit and taught by Him, ALL spiritual matters are utterly foreign to him. Being a Ph. D. does NOT help either, for in this realm it could mean, "Phenomenal Dud.!!" The Word of God not only brings us God's joy and love, but it also imparts God's power for holy living.

We are IN the world but not OF the world, and therefore, we must not live LIKE the world!! Sometimes we think it would be easier if we were *"out of the world,"* - but this is not true. Wherever we go, we take our own sinful self with us, and the powers of darkness will follow us.

Dr. A.W. Tozer used to say that the invisible world described in the Bible was the only "real world." You know, if we would only see the visible world the way God wants us to see it, we would never be attracted by what it offers.

The great men and women of faith, mentioned in Hebrews 11, achieved what they did because they "saw the invisible" (Heb. 11:10, 13-14, 27). The things of this world seem so real because we can see them and feel them; but actually, they are all temporal and destined to pass away. Even Satan is well aware that only the eternal things of the spiritual life will last forever.

How can we look at things that are invisible? By faith, when you read the Word of God. We have never seen Christ or heaven, yet we know they are real because the Word of God tells us so.

Hebrews 11:1 reminds us that FAITH is *"the evidence of things not seen."* Because Abraham BY FAITH looked for the heavenly city, he separated himself from Sodom and he walked by faith. But what about Lot?? Lot chose Sodom because he walked by sight and not by faith.

Of course, the unsaved world thinks we are odd—perhaps even crazy—because we insist on the reality of the invisible world of spiritual blessing. Yet the wise Christians are the ones who are content to govern their lives by eternal values, not temporal things. Sooner or later every believer discovers that the Christian life is a battleground, NOT a playground. They discover that they face an enemy who is much stronger than they are —apart from the Lord.

As Christians, we face three enemies:- The world, - the flesh, and Satan and his hordes. (Eph. 2:1-3).

The *"world"* refers to the system around us that is opposed to God.

This Satanic system caters to:- *"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"* (1 John 2:15-17).

"Society apart from God" is a simple, but accurate, definition of "the world."

The *"flesh"* is the old nature that we inherited from Adam, - a nature that is opposed to God and can do nothing spiritual to please God.

We must encourage one another with the fact that Jesus, by His death and resurrection, overcame the world and the flesh and Satan. (John 16:33; Gal. 6:14, Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 2:20, Eph. 1:19-23). In other words, as believers, we do not fight FOR victory—we fight FROM a position of victory!! - HIS VICTORY!! You see, the Spirit of God enables us, by FAITH, to appropriate and claim Christ's victory for ourselves!!

In James 1:27b, Christians are urged to "keep themselves unspotted from the world." As indicated before, by "the world" James means "society without God."

In John 14:30, we read that Satan is the prince of this world, and in Luke 16:8 we note that the lost are the children of this world. As the children of God, we are IN the world physically - but not OF the world spiritually. (John 17:11-16).

In John 17:18, we see that we are sent INTO the world to WIN others to Christ. It is only as we maintain our separation from the world that we can serve others. The world wants to "spot" the Christian and to defile him.

First, there is *"friendship of the world"* that James 4:4 speaks of which can lead to a love for the world. (1 John 2:15-17). If we are not careful, we will become conformed to this world and the result of being conformed to this world is being condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:32). This does not suggest that we lose our salvation, but that we lose ALL that we have lived for on earth.

LOT is an illustration of this principle. First he pitched his tent toward Sodom, and then he moved into Sodom. Before long, Sodom moved into HIM and he lost his testimony even with his own family. When judgment fell on Sodom, Lot lost everything!!

It was Abraham, the separated believer, the friend of God, who had a greater and more effective ministry to the people than did Lot, the friend of the world!! As we discussed previously, it is not necessary for the Christian to get involved WITH the world to have a Christian ministry TO the world.

1 Peter 1:19 tells us that Jesus was without blemish and without spot, and yet He was the friend of publicans and sinners!! The BEST way to minister to the needs of the world is to be pure and free from the defilement of the world.

Do you know that according to God, friendship with the world to the exclusion of God, is compared to ADULTERY?? You see, Romans 7:4 tells us that the believer is soon to be "married to Christ", and therefore has an obligation to be faithful to Him.

The Jewish Christians who read this letter would understand this picture of "spiritual adultery" because the Prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Hosea used it when rebuking Judah for her sins. [see Jer. 3:1-5; Ezek. 23; Hosea 1-2). By adopting the sinful ways of the other nations, and by worshiping their gods, the nation of Judah committed adultery against her God.

The world is the ENEMY of God, and whoever wills to be a friend of the world cannot at the same time be the friend of God. You see, it was the world that crucified the Lord of life and glory, Jesus Christ!! In fact, it was the religious world at the time that played the key role in putting Him to death!!

How unthinkable it is that believers should ever want to walk arm-in-arm with the world that brutally murdered their Saviour!! Neither can a Christian who is a friend of the world be a friend of God's IF he lives for the flesh, - for this is the second enemy for the believer.

Why is the world an enemy of the Christian?? Because of what the world can do to a Christian!! 1 John 2:15 says that, "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" Worldliness is not so much a matter of activity, as of ATTITUDE.

It is possible for a Christian to stay away from questionable amusements and doubtful places and still LOVE the world.! You see, worldliness is a matter of the HEART. To the extent that a Christian loves the world system and the things in it, he does NOT love the Father. Worldliness not only affects your response to the LOVE of God; it also affects your response to the WILL of God.

Doing the WILL of God is a joy for those living in the LOVE of God. Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" But when a believer LOSES his enjoyment of the Father's love, he finds it hard to OBEY the Father's WILL.

When you put these two factors together, you have a practical definition of worldliness:- Anything in a Christian's life that causes him to LOSE HIS ENJOYMENT of the Father's love, Or, his desire to DO the Father's will is worldly and must be avoided.

Responding to the Father's love is reflected in your personal devotional life, and doing the Father's will is reflected in your daily conduct. —these are two tests of worldliness.

Many things in this world are definitely wrong and God's Word identifies them as SINS. For example, it is wrong to steal and to lie. (Eph. 4:25, 28). Sexual sins are wrong. (Eph. 5:1-3). Each believer must apply the test to his own life and be scrupulously honest in his self-examination. We must also remember that even a GOOD thing may rob a believer of his enjoyment of God's love and his desire to DO God's will.

Let's look at a Christian who took his focus off Jesus Christ and fell in love with this world which is passing away.

Demas is mentioned only three times in Paul's letters, and these three references tell a SAD story. Firstly, in Philemon 24, he is called "*Demas . . . my fellow labourer*" and is linked with three very good men—Mark, Aristarchus, and Luke.

Then, in Colossians 4:14, he is simply called "Demas," and there is NO special word of identification or commendation.

But the third reference tells what became of Demas:- 2 Timothy 4:10:- "*for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.*" At one point in his life, John Mark had forsaken Paul; but he was reclaimed and restored. Demas forsook Paul and apparently was never reclaimed. His SIN was that he LOVED this present world.

The word world refers to the whole system of things that runs this world, or "a society without God and opposed to God." As we discussed earlier, the world entices the believer with "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" (1 John 2:15-17).

The "lust of the flesh" refers to such sensual bodily appetites as proceed from within our evil, old sin nature.

The *"lust of the eyes"* applies to such evil desires as may arise from what we SEE.

The *"pride of life"* is an unholy ambition for self-display and self-glory.

Which of these traps caught Demas, we do not know; perhaps he fell into ALL three. But we DO know that Christians today can succumb to the world just as Demas did.

How easy it is to maintain a religious veneer, while all the time we are living for the things of this world. Demas thought that he could serve TWO masters, but eventually he had to make a decision; - unfortunately, he made the wrong decision. It must have hurt Paul greatly when Demas forsook him.

It also hurt the work of the Lord, for there never has been a time when the labourers were many. This decision hurt Demas most of all, for he wasted his life in that which could never last. *"And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* (1 John 2:17).

When a bank is becoming insolvent, smart people do not keep making deposits into it. When the foundation slab of a building is breaking up builders do not proceed with any construction of the building. Concentrating your time and efforts on this dying and doomed world is tantamount to re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic AFTER its collision with that iceberg.

Likewise, wise people don't throw their lot in with this dying planet filled with spiritually dead people!! Why else do you think that Jesus urged us to invest in the eternal values of heaven which pays huge dividends – instead of risking ALL by investing in vain, temporal things of EARTH.??

The New Testament word which describes a double-minded man in the Greek literally means:- "a two-souled man." He is like a cork, floating on a wave, now carried to the shore, now away from it.

The ancient writer of myths, AESOP, described a double-minded person when he wrote about a time when the beasts and the fowls were engaged in war. The BAT tried to belong to both parties. When the birds were victorious, he would wing around telling everyone that he was a bird. When the beasts won a fight, he would walk around assuring everyone that he was a beast. But soon his hypocrisy was discovered by BOTH the beasts and the birds. He had to hide himself, and now he can appear openly only by night!!

A more modern story comes to us from the American Civil War concerning a neutral observer attempting to escape after being accidentally trapped in a furious battle. Hoping to continue NEUTRAL, he put on a pair of Confederate pants and a Yankee coat and dashed across no-man's land, only to be immediately shot down by both sides. Both pants and coat were literally riddled with bullets!!

To be double-minded is to forget James 1:8 and James 4:8:- *"he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."* James 1:8, *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."* James 4:8

The double-minded person is like an unfaithful husband or wife: he wants to love both GOD and the WORLD. James admonished, *purify your hearts, you double-minded."*

The Greek word translated *"purify"* literally means "make chaste." The picture is that of an unfaithful lover. The Christian who loves God, and who knows that God loves him, will not fall apart when God permits trials to come.

This is because he is secure in God's love. He is NOT double-minded, trying to love BOTH God and the world.

LOT was double-minded and when trials came along, he failed miserably. On the other hand, ABRAHAM was the friend of God; he loved God and trusted Him. When trials came, Abraham triumphed over them and matured in the faith. God wants you to follow Abraham's example, - NOT Lot's!!

Now, let's have a look at John 4:4 again as I want to tie all of the ends together so that we will be able to complete the 7th deadly device that Satan uses against Christians:- *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome THEM, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

Have you ever bumped into a person that you knew as a Christian years ago.? A person who at that particular time seemed to be following Jesus Christ.? Yet something in life came along and shook their faith. They blamed God and turned against God.

And after a little while, along came an agent of Satan – a teacher of false doctrines who totally sucked them in and enlisted them into their heretical group. Now, this same person has become quite anti-Christian in their outlook and is spouting out the diatribe of false teachers to all and sundry who will listen to them.

How does such a thing come about.??

The only explanation is that such a person had failed to heed the admonition in 1st John 4:1. They failed to *"test the spirits, whether they be of God or not,"* as John exhorts us in verse 1 of Chapter 4:- *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit,*

but test the spirits, whether they are of God;" Then John goes on to give us the test, the measure, by which we can tell TRUTH from ERROR in this mixed-up, confused, bewildered world in which we live.

That test, is two-fold:-

It was, first, an acknowledgment of the historic incarnation of Jesus Christ. The fact that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the Holy One of God, had actually come into human history. That He had come as a Man in the flesh; that, in a word, Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ!! - The MESSIAH!!

But, it is much more than just being acknowledged as TRUE, it must be CONFESSED. John uses this word, "confess".

He says, *"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,"* (1 John 4:2). The great test of a truly born again believer, or a Christian teacher is:- What do you think of Jesus Christ.?? How do you evaluate and assess Him.?? *"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,"*

It is not so much the confession of the historical fact that Jesus was born into the world in a human body; but rather, it is the confession of a living person, Jesus Christ come in the FLESH. It is the confession that acknowledges Jesus as the CHRIST INCARNATE. (The Son of God Embodied in human form)

Confessing Him also means bowing to Him as Lord of your life!! Now if you ever hear a person presenting the Lord Jesus as the true Christ of God, you will know that he is speaking by the Spirit of God!!

Now, beginning with Verse 4, John continues to unfold certain factors at work in this whole matter of truth versus error. You can well understand how important these truths are today amidst the confusion that exists everywhere.

1 John 4:4-6 *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 6. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."*

You will note that each of these THREE verses begins with an emphatic pronoun. That is true both in the Greek and the English.

There is first in verse 4, *"YOU are of God."*

Then, in Verse 5, *"THEY are of the world"*

and, in Verse 6, *"WE are of God."*

There are three distinct groups set forth here and they are NOT the same at all.

The first group is addressed as *"little children."* These are the readers of this letter from the Apostle John and they are said to be *"of God."* Here obviously are Christians whom John declares have overcome the false teachers.

That is, they have escaped the flattery of the false teachers, and have NOT been deluded by their false teaching. They have heard ALL the arguments of the false teachers and have successfully been enabled to see through them and to see the truth.

Humble believers are able to overcome these false teachers because they have the Holy Spirit WITHIN them, and this enables them through obedience to Him to detect their error and refuse to listen to it. SO, he is saying, *"You are of God and you have overcome these false teachers."*

Now, what is important in this verse is to note the ground of their victory. How was it that they overcame?

IF there is any sure way that you and I can escape the extreme pressures of theological error today, it will be by this SAME way. This way is indicated not so much by observing what he says, BUT, by what he does NOT say.

These *"little children"* who are *"of God"* overcame the false teachers, despite all of their subtle, pernicious error which they so beautifully and attractively presented. But it WASN'T because of SUPERIOR intelligence that they overcame them!!

You'll notice that it says nothing about them being smarter than these teachers. NOR was it because they had been subjected to intense training against these false cults. There is no word about that either.

NOR is it that they had been supported and fortified by clever arguments with which they were able to answer the errors of the false teachers. NOR was it their broad theological knowledge. There is none of this written by John!!

John says, *"you overcame them because greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world."* In other words, it was not anything these Christians had that delivered them, it was because the Holy Spirit dwelt within them. It was the

greatness of God within them that kept them from falling victim to these ministers of Satan. It was the fact that God was greater than the spirit that was at work behind the teachers of error.

This is what will keep US on the right path today. – IF ONLY we will faithfully and obediently follow Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Word of God!! When we think of the violence, the passion, the tears, and the death with which our world is characterized, we can SEE something of the greatness of the power of the enemy.

No wonder someone has said:-

*"Our race HAD a hopeful beginning,
But man spoiled his chances by sinning,
We hope that the story will end in God's glory,
But at present the other side's winning."*

It does look that way, doesn't it? But it isn't - despite all the appearances.!

God is FAR greater than the power of the enemy. In fact, it is almost ludicrous to put it that way. God is so incomparably greater that there is NO contest whatsoever.

THIS is where the eye of faith must always turn in hours of darkness, discomfort, or despair. It must turn to what the Scriptures reveal as the truth about God and how incomparably greater HE is than anything that is present among men or behind men.!!

READ of God's greatness in Isaiah, the 40th chapter. What an encouraging chapter that is!! I love to turn to it even more these days.

The prophet cries out at the unbelief of the people of God in Verse 21, *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?"* Isaiah 40:21a "What is the matter with you people," he is saying. "Why all this gloom and despair? Why this mood of pessimism? Why this wringing of the hands and rending of your clothes? Haven't you been told what God is like?"

Isaiah goes on:- Isaiah 40:21b-23:- *Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. 23. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless.*

Isaiah 40:25-26a *"To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things,*" That is what people need to DO in these days of darkness.

Isaiah 40:26:- *"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing."*

Isaiah 40:27a *"Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the Lord,"*

Imagine that!! Do you think that God is unaware of what is happening in your life and the problems that you are going through.?? The prophet says, *"Imagine thinking that your right has been disregarded by God."*

Isaiah 40:28a:- *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary."*

Isaiah 40:29:- *"He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength."*

Do you remember what Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians as he came into Corinth, that beautiful city of culture and refinement.? That CITY with its love of great wisdom and the philosophers and the great thinkers of the golden age of Greece, How he rejected every approach on the basis of human wisdom and said:-

1 Corinthians 2:2:- *"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

The reason he gave was that the weakness of God is stronger than men and the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

That is, even when God acts in some way that seems to be utterly weak, it is still ever so much stronger than anything that man can do. That is the greatness of God. God is infinitely greater than all else and He lives permanently WITHIN every Christian.!!! *"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

I love that wonderful cry of triumph on the part of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11 after he concludes his great piece of writing on the providence of God and the free will of man with the CRY:-

Romans 11:33-36:- *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34. "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor?" 35. "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" 36. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."*

GOD is greater -- incomparably greater -- than the wisdom of Satan.

Whoever in childlike faith trusts the Word of God to guide him through life, will find that he will be safely kept through all entrapping errors.

These people can sing as we do sometimes:-

*"Thru' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home."*

God's power is greater than anything that we can ever possibly imagine – and this power is freely available to every one of His children to draw upon

One of the most helpful verses to me as a young Christian, which I pass on to any young Christians here is Proverbs 3:5-6. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6. in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* What a guide through life that is!!!

We should make a habit of reminding ourselves everyday of those verses, and our current verse 1 John 4:4:- *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

Remember that our great God and Father is so much greater than Satan and anything else that is in this dying world!!

8. DISHONESTY.

The ways Satan can inflict this deadly device upon Christians are almost without number.

The child of God need not simply lie or steal to be dishonest. There are many more subtle ways in which a person can be dishonest. To hold back certain facts in a given situation may be dishonest. Ananias and his wife Sapphira committed the sin unto death through their dishonesty:- (lying to the Holy Spirit)

The sin unto death is a sin which only a believer can commit. It refers not to his eternal soul, but to his earthly service. It is persistent, wilful sinning in a believer in which 'the flesh is destroyed' and physical death occurs. This sin is committed when a believer allows his life to become so carnal and unproductive that God simply takes him home early via physical death. Both Saul and Samson are types of this very severe chastening in the Old Testament.

And there are several instances of it in the New Testament, too. This sin is not to be prayed for because it involves the execution of an immutable law of God unaltered by prayer.

1 John 5:16-17:- *"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. 17. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death."*

Let's see what Ananias and his wife Sapphira did to incur such a judgement from God.

Acts 5:1-5:- But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4. "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things."

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, gross dishonesty and blatant hypocrisy led to the sin unto death. Ananias and Sapphira lied concerning the amount of a gift they presented to the Jerusalem church after selling some of their possessions. Their sin was in tempting God, - that is, to see how far one can go in presuming upon God's goodness.

In Matthew 4:7 Jesus said to Satan, *"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "*

Galatians 6:7:- *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.* Believers would do well not to believe Satan's lie that there are no consequences when God is mocked.

There are three short phrases in verse 7 of Galatians 6 that are quite easy to understand, but the more we think about them, the more profound they will seem to us. Let's look at the first two:-

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; That is a reminder of the fall of the first human pair in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2-3). God made everything for the first man and woman beautiful and fulfilling. He told them to eat of all the trees that he had made, to enjoy all the wide creation that he had established for them.

He said, *"There is nothing prohibited you except one thing: the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of it, you will die."* Then the tempter came to the first human pair and began to deceive them as to what God might really have meant. The serpent was enchanting, - the fruit was attractive, - the possibilities were marvellous.

"You can become like God!!! "He really wants you to do what He said he doesn't want you to do. He expects you to grow up and challenge him a bit."

The serpent was insisting in a clever way that God could be mocked, that He was a bit of a buffoon, that His statements were NOT reliable. He was making God out to be sort of Wizard of Oz:- *"I am Oz, the great and terrible."*

The voice resounded and the images were impressive, but behind the screen was a ventriloquist from Omaha who didn't really have any power to do anything!!! The argument of the serpent in the Garden was:- *"When God pronounces consequences, He's wrong. He's unable to DO what He says, so you can get around Him."*

The argument that you can ignore God without any problem. That you can have it your way and He'll do nothing, That there are NO consequences of your choices in life, is the first and last lie!!! *"God cannot be mocked."*

He is NOT like the gods of ancient pantheons who were often drunk, drowsy, puffed up with pride, or easily tricked!!! The ancient people spent most of their time trying to figure out how to trick the gods!! The people who were most looked up to in the ancient world were the savvy insiders who knew their gods' secret shortcomings. They KNEW how to play off one god against another, HOW to beat the system, HOW to have it their own way!!

Paul was writing here that it is immense foolishness and stupidity to imagine that the God of the Bible is such a god!! He will not be ridiculed!! He means exactly what He says!! None can prevent Him from carrying out his plans.

Now, LYING is also dishonesty. Colossians 3:9 *"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds."* Because a Christian is now a new creation in Jesus Christ, god commands them not to tell lies.

"Do not lie to one another" God says. A lie is an attempt to communicate what is false with the evident purpose of misleading. Paul wrote this same warning to the believers in Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:25:- *"Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbour, for we are members of one another."* This may be a good time to hear Jesus' description of Satan and the Pharisees:-

John 8:44:- *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."*

Question: What does Jesus tell us here about Satan?? Let's now see a vivid contrast between Satan the father of lies, and the Holy Spirit who permanently indwells every true born again believer:-

John 14:16-17:- *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, 17. "even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."*

When a Christian lies, he is cooperating with Satan; - he is living his life as Satan wants him to live it!! However, when the believer speaks the truth in love he is cooperating with the Spirit of God.' And he is living his life honestly which pleases and honours his Heavenly Father.

Ephesians 4:14-15:- *"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, 15. but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ..."*

A lie can also be any misrepresentation of the truth, even if the words are accurate. The tone of voice, the look on the face, OR, a gesture of the hand can ALTER the MEANING of a sentence. And so can the motive of the heart!!

If my watch is wrong and I give a friend the wrong time, that is NOT a lie. Lying involves the intent to deceive for the purpose of personal gain. An old proverb says:- *"Half a fact is a whole lie."*

Bishop Warren A. Candler was preaching about the lies of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and asked the congregation:- "If God still struck people dead for lying, where would I be?" The congregation snickered a bit, but the smiles disappeared when the Bishop shouted:- "I'd be right here—preaching to an empty church!!"

Remember, that LYING destroys TRUST. It also violates TRUTH and LOVE. It causes hurt and breaks relationships. If we live our lives in untruth we merely show that we do not understand the relationship between the God of truth and the Christian life.

The profound change at our new birth changed the nature of the Christian's way of life. This conversion should change the way that we relate with people, too!! People should be able to trust our words because we now have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who IS the Truth!!

Colossians 3:9-10 . *"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10. and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*

In effect, Paul is saying in Colossians 3 verse 9:-"Let your state be consistent with your standing." You have put off the old man/self, now let him be put off practically by refraining from LIES. Lies are one of the things that belong to the OLD man - your former lifestyle and it has no place in the life of the child of God!!

Remember - Lies destroy TRUST!! LIES are habit forming and they will damage your reputation and integrity. Very importantly, when a Christian lies, it grieves the Holy Spirit and dishonours the Lord Jesus Christ!!

Another serious form of dishonesty is to deliberately withhold offerings to God when He has blessed you in such a way that it is within your means to give them. As Christians we can and do rob God by withholding offerings to be used in His service.

We can see from the example of Abraham that he understood something of the WILL of God when it came to worshipping the Lord with his increase. Giving of his increase was an important form of worship to God then, as it should be for us today!! Unfortunately, many people in the church today do not realize the great privilege of giving to God as a means of WORSHIP. Many equate giving to God as some sort of tax, – like some sort of tax to the A.T.O.!!

'If I go to church then it will cost me something. But I don't want to be out of sorts with God and so I'll write Him a cheque and I will have rendered unto God the things that are God's and I'll be O.K. for another week, until the tax-man, [the Pastor] expects me to give again.' No, no!... That's not giving unto the Lord and it's not giving cheerfully.

2 Corinthians 9:7:- *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."*

To worship God with what He's given us is to understand that everything belongs to Him in the first place!!! Our appreciation of His eternal life, given to us in Christ, is to say to Him, "thank you Lord." "I worship You with what You've given me in this life knowing that my true rewards will be in my heavenly home with You."

We have to recognize that God is to be worshipped, NOT ONLY with our lips, but also with our LIVES!! And there is no more tangible way of expressing that, than in the one thing which is so important to all of us.; The means of carrying on our existence by using such things as money, OR, the increase of our labour. God KNOWS the importance of this!!

This is why He encourages us to work in this world to put food on the table, a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs. But in ordaining the means to provide for our needs, He has also ordained this tangible stuff, we call "*money*", to be used to SHOW Him that "*money*" does NOT take priority over loving Him with all our hearts, souls and minds.

You see, God NEEDS NOTHING of our possessions. He is totally self sufficient in EVERYTHING!! But our giving shows a dependence and trust on God who Himself gives all good gifts and it shows that we're willing to trust that God can meet ALL of our needs over and above what we expect.

To be less than we should be as pastors, parents, or workers is to cheat our people and our children and thus become DISHONEST. It is estimated that over one-half billion dollars each year is raised by false and dishonest "faith healers" who cannot DO what they claim, - and smooth-talking false teachers who do not BELIEVE what they say.

Philippians 4:8:- *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things."*

Now, let's look at our role model – our Heavenly Father. Let's look at the absolute honesty of our Heavenly Father, and at the absolute honesty of His divine revelation to Man. - - the Word of God,

Perhaps no other single statement so completely summarises the Bible as does the following:- *"The bible is NOT a book that man COULD write if he WOULD, or WOULD write if he COULD."*

Let us analyse this one section at a time.

"MAN COULD NOT WRITE THE BIBLE IF HE WOULD". Even if a man had all the necessary spirituality he could NOT know the facts involved in the historical, scientific, and prophetic statements that are seen in the Bible. Thus, without God's direction the Bible is NOT a book that man could write if he would.

"MAN WOULD NOT WRITE THE BIBLE IF HE COULD". Suppose God would give sinful man ALL the necessary facts and abilities to write the Bible. What then ? Man still would NOT write it correctly if he could.

Let's look at some reasons for this:-

1. BECAUSE OF THE BAD THINGS GOD WRITES ABOUT SOME OF HIS FRIENDS.

Here five (5) men immediately come to mind. By the way, most of these individuals are mentioned in the FAITH "Hall of Fame." (Hebrews 11).

NOAH. - Indeed a man of God. He WALKED with God, he was a JUST man and he OBEYED God. YET, after the flood this great HERO of the faith gets drunk and exposes his nakedness and shame to his entire family. (Gen 9:20-24). Surely a mere human author would NOT have written all this ??

MOSES. The meekest man in all the earth during his time and a leader who single-handedly LED an entire nation of enslaved Hebrews OUT OF captivity in Egypt. BUT en-route to Palestine we read of his anger and direct disobedience to the clearly revealed Word of God!! (see Num 20:7-12). Surely man would have eliminated this part of Moses' record ??

DAVID. Without exception the grandest human king who ever sat upon the throne!! God Himself would testify that here was "a man after His own heart" (see 1 Sam 13:14; 16:7,12,13). David's fearlessness – His LOVE for God and his kindness were universally known. BUT, in 2 Samuel 11 this same king is accurately accused of lust, adultery, lying, and cold-blooded murder!!!! Who but God would write in such an honest manner ?

ELIJAH. Few other Old Testament prophets are as colourful and exciting as ELIJAH the TISHBITE. In 1 Kings 18, he champions the cause of God against 450 priests of Satan, BUT, in the very next chapter he is pictured as running for his very life from a mere woman !!

PETER. Self-appointed spokesman for Christ who so confidently assured the Saviour in Matthew 26:33 that:- "*Even though all may fall away because of You, - I WILL NEVER FALL AWAY*" But in the hour of Jesus' great need we read of Peter in Matthew 26:74:- "*Then he began to curse and swear, "I DO NOT KNOW THE MAN"*". Yet another obvious reason why man still would NOT write the Bible correctly if he could is:- BECAUSE OF THE GOOD THINGS GOD WRITES ABOUT SOME OF HIS ENEMIES.

As we have already seen, on many occasions God records BAD things about his FRIENDS, - and he often mentions GOOD things about his ENEMIES.

This can be seen in the account of ESAU in his gracious treatment of his brother Jacob. (Genesis 33)

ARTAXERXES (Neh 2) His approval to allow Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

DARIUS (Dan 6) In his proclamation for all of the people to honour the God of Daniel.

And then there is GAMALIEL who was the most distinguished of Israel's rabbis, and the teacher of Saul of Tarsus. God makes special mention of his kind intervention on behalf of the apostles when they were brought before the leaders of the Jews. (Acts 5:34-39);

Then there is JULIUS who was a centurion attached to the Augustan Regiment which was a distinguished legion of the Roman army. God makes special mention of Julius because of his kindness in allowing his prisoner Paul the apostle to go ashore to visit his friends and to receive some care. (Acts 27:1-3); etc.

The point of all the above is simply this:- The Bible is NOT an edited book. God literally "*tells it like it is*". Human authors, however sincere, simply do not consistently write this way.

Yet another obvious reason why man still would NOT write the Bible correctly if he could is:-

C. BECAUSE OF CERTAIN DOCTRINES REPUGNANT TO THE NATURAL MIND.

MANY examples could be listed here, but the following three will demonstrate this:-

1. THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL HELL. (See Rev 14:10,11).
2. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S TOTAL HELPLESSNESS. (See Rom 7:18; Eph 2:8,9).
3. THE DOCTRINE OF FINAL JUDGEMENT UPON SAVED AND UNSAVED. (See 1 Cor 3:9-15; Rev 20:11-15).

To be dishonest is to forget 2 Corinthians 4:2:- "*But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*"

Satan is a master counterfeiter who for centuries has LED people astray by deceiving their minds, - blinding their hearts and encouraging their dishonesty.

Israel was often seduced into sin by false prophets, - and the church also has had its share of false teachers.

When you have a clear conscience, you glorify Jesus Christ!! You cannot glorify Christ and practice deception at the same time. If you do, you will definitely violate your conscience and erode your character; and eventually - the truth will come out!!

How can God reveal truth through false and dishonest instruments? The witness and the walk of the Christian must go together, because the WORK that we do flows out of the LIVES that we live. One of the blessings of a good conscience is that we are NOT afraid to face GOD or MEN, - or to claim the promises God gives in His Word.

Finally, when you have a clear conscience, you will be on good terms with the Spirit of God. (2 Cor. 1:21-24). The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee to you that He is dependable and will certainly accomplish all that He has promised.

Paul was careful NOT to grieve the Holy Spirit; and, because the Spirit was not convicting him, he knew that his motives were pure and his conscience was clear.

9. DECEIT.

Dictionary Meaning:- The act of deceiving, Any dishonest actions, false, tricky, fraudulent, two-faced.

The word deceit is found many times in the New Testament. As one considers them, it is amazing just how many occur in those passages dealing either with the Word of God or the last days, or, BOTH. Note but a few of these:-

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12:- "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10. and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12. that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

2 Corinthians 2:17:- "For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ."

2 Corinthians 11:13:- "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ."

2 John 1:7:- "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

In other words, Satan's big "D" in the last days is DECEIT.

On the one hand, the weird cults of our day deceive people by attempting to add to God's Word, - while the false teachers practice deception by taking away from the Scriptures. Jesus himself apparently warns against BOTH deceiving groups in His last spoken message.

Revelation 22:16-19:- "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." 17. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. 18. For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19. and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

To be deceitful is to confirm Jeremiah 17:9:- "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?*" In those two lines you have the explanation of ALL the misery and heartache and injustice and evil of life.

It all stems from the fact that man has genetically inherited a SIN nature that is capable of every conceivable type of evil. In our passage today, it is referred to as the "heart" - and sometimes, it is also referred to as the "flesh". The heart, the natural life into which we were born, has two things wrong with it.

Firstly, it is desperately wicked and corrupt. It's interesting that in Jeremiah 15:18 and Jeremiah 30:12, the term, "desperately wicked" is translated by the word, "incurable" Man's lower creature nature is that wicked and corrupt that it is incurable!!

Jeremiah 15:18:- "Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed?"

Jeremiah 30:12:- "For thus says the Lord: `Your affliction is incurable, your wound is severe."

Because man's heart is desperately corrupt, it never can function as it originally was designed to do. It can never fulfil all you expect of it. It will never fulfil your ideals, or bring you to the place where you can be what you would really like to be.

It is corrupt, wicked and incurable!! It is infected with a fatal virus. And it cannot be changed. There is nothing you can do to change the destructive power of the old sin nature. Therefore there is only one thing it is good for -- to be put to death!!

And that is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did with it when he died on the Cross many centuries later. He took that fatal human nature, and He put it to death, because that was all it was good for!!

Christ not only died FOR us but we died WITH Him. We are identified in His death. When Jesus died to sin, He not only died as our SUBSTITUTE, - He died also as our REPRESENTATIVE!! Christ not only died FOR sin, bearing its PENALTY; but He died UNTO sin, breaking its POWER. Because we are "in Christ" through the work of the Holy Spirit, we DIED with Christ. This means that we CAN have victory over the old sin nature that wants so desperately to control us.

Romans 6:2:- *"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it.?"*

I know that some people have trouble at this point. They simply cannot accept the depravity of man. This verse in Jeremiah, among others like it in the Scriptures, divides humanity right down the centre!! You either believe this verse, and act the rest of your life understanding this fact stated by God, or, you deny it and say:- It is not true; man is basically good."

You have to decide whether you think that the Creator has a better understanding of man, or whether the secular counsellors of the world know much more about homo-sapiens than God does. Your whole system of philosophy and of education and of legislation, and everything else, will be determined by which one of those views you take. This is the Great Divide of mankind, right here.

I think one of the greatest and clearest confirmations of the truth in this verse is perhaps the Constitution of Australia. Our founding fathers were so aware of this great fact -- that man, by nature, is desperately corrupt -- that they never trusted a single man, even the best of them, with ultimate power. They set up checks and balances by which any man in office, even the most admired of men, would have his power scrutinised and examined by others. They did not trust anybody, and rightfully so!!

I have often quoted these words from Winston Churchill, an astute observer of life:- "Certain it is that, while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress -- starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy -- the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up." Churchill understood that *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."*

No system of philosophy, of psychology, of education, will ever serve to eliminate the wrongful, evil failing of the human heart. It just cannot be done!! We have to face life on those terms.

As if that were not bad enough -- that we have this poisoned well --this old sin nature- there is also another quality about it: it is deceitful above all things. It never looks bad, like it is. It has an amazing power to disguise itself and look good and hopeful and fair -- admirable, even.

That is what is so deceitful about it. This explains why, all through the centuries, men continually keep trying to make it better. This is why most of the attempts of humanity are equivalent to taking a well with poisoned water, and trying to improve the quality of the water by painting the pump!!

Haven't you ever felt this way about yourself? Perhaps you've thought "I know there are a few little things that I do (and they're always little things, not very significant), just a few minor aberrations which, if I could just correct, I think that I would be a splendid person to live with!!" Do YOU feel that way?

If you do, then I'm afraid that you are suffering from the deceitfulness of the heart. It can look good -- it has that ability to do so --but it is unable to help itself. It is deceitful above ALL things!! The heart is clever and crafty; - it can appear one way when it is quite another.

Every once in a while we know this about ourselves, don't we? We KNOW that we have a frightening ability to hide an angry heart under flattering words. or, that we can speak softly and lovingly to someone whom we really dislike. We know we can do it; because we have done it!!

We can use a sweet tone, and act and sound as if we are perfectly at ease, when inwardly we might be seething with revolt and rebellion. That is the heart!! It has that ability and it has that tendency!!

Just as ISAAC and ISHMAEL were unable to get along, so the Holy Spirit and the flesh (the old nature) are at WAR with each other.

By "the flesh," of course, I DO NOT mean "the BODY." The human body is NOT sinful; it is NEUTRAL.

IF the Holy Spirit controls the BODY, then we walk in the Spirit; - but if the flesh controls the body, then we walk in the lusts (desires) of the flesh. The Holy Spirit and the flesh have different appetites, and THIS is what creates the conflict!! These opposite appetites are illustrated in the Bible in different ways.

For example, the sheep is a clean animal and avoids garbage, while the pig is an unclean animal and enjoys wallowing in filth. (2 Peter 2:19-22). Our old nature is like the PIG, always looking for something unclean on which to FEED. Our new nature is like the SHEEP, yearning for that which is clean and holy. No wonder a struggle goes on within the life of the believer!! YET, the unsaved man knows nothing of this battle because he does not have the Holy Spirit.

Your MIND controls your BODY, and your WILL controls your MIND. Many people think they can control their will by "willpower," but usually they fail.

(This was Paul's experience as recorded in Romans 7:15-21). Paul is not denying that there IS victory. He is simply pointing out that we cannot win this victory in our own strength and by our own will. The Christian cannot simply WILL to overcome the flesh:-

Phillips writes:- "Suppose a biologist were to perform an experiment by grafting, at a given stage of development, a butterfly to a spider and do so in such a way that the two creatures were fused into ONE and thus grew to maturity. What a clash of instincts there would be in a monstrosity like this!! One part of the creature's nature would long for the clear vault of heaven, while the other part would crave a web in a dark corner and a diet of blood. What could be done with such a creature? Nothing, except put it to death. There is a sense in which, in the Garden of Eden, Satan performed just such diabolical surgery on the human race." (Exploring Romans, p. 120)

It is only when we yield the WILL to God that His power can take over and give us the willpower (and the won't power!) that we need to be victorious Christians. The heart can appear fair. – but left to itself, it reeks of deceit!!

Satan is well aware that we have this internal enemy. – and he loves to try to influence Christians to succumb to it. He's read its pedigree from Galatians 5:19-21 !! He knows exactly what it is capable of!!

Now, that is the heart, and the only book in the world which tells you this is the Bible -- and those books which are based upon it. You will never find that information in any other source. All studies of humanity will never lead you to this revelation.

This is God Himself, opening up a truth which divides the world, and which men must know if they are going to face life the way it really is. No wonder Jeremiah's response in Jeremiah 17:9b is just one line: Who can know it.? (or, Who can understand it.?)

Now, some may ask, "Lord, if this is true, how do you expect me to run my own life? How do you expect me to solve my problems? How do you expect me to know what to do? How can you lay upon me any responsibility, if this is true?"

Look at God's solution, Verse 10:- *I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."*

The Lord knows the whole truth about the heart and He will deal with all of us justly according to our deeds.

1 Peter 1:15-19:- *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16. because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." 17. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear; (respectful, reverential awe) 18. knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19. but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

Paul gives us the equivalent of this in Galatians 6:7-8:- *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8. For he who sows to his flesh [the heart which is evil] will of the flesh reap corruption, [because their heart is desperately corrupt]; but he who sows to the Spirit [the Holy Spirit from God, given to him in Jesus Christ] will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. [because their God is the living God]."*

The well will produce water according to its nature; - the tree will produce fruit according to its nature. The Lord Jesus Himself taught us that.

Jeremiah's answer to this is beautiful. Verse 11:-*"As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; it will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool."*

Ill-gotten gain is, like a bird with young from eggs that she has not laid, soon lost!! He is saying that it is useless to count on natural wisdom or natural goodness to enrich your life. Since all this is true, then to count on a heart which is desperately corrupt and deceitful above all things, is an absolutely stupid and foolish thing to do!

And if you build your life -- gain your wealth and assets -- on that basis, in the midst of your life they will abandon you and leave you desolate and miserable. -As they grow older these people learn that the flesh that they lived to please is decaying and dying.

Then, in the age to come they lose eternal rewards that could have been theirs if only they had believed God!! That is so true, is it not? Having the wrong focus in life will always disillusion you and let you down.

But, on the other hand, Jeremiah goes on to say in Verse 12:- *"A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."*

This is where a man finds the answer to his life, the solution to his problems., the understanding of his own nature, and the meeting of his need for a sanctuary, - a place to go!!

True permanence is found only in the Lord!! Unlike riches which are soon lost, is the eternal throne of God. Those who forsake Him will suffer shame for a life "written in the dust", instead of written in the "Book of Life." One of the reasons why men fight the fact that we are born with this kind of a nature is that they do not know of any place else to go.

And to say they have to abandon the only nature that they know seems to them to be tantamount to saying:- "You have to commit some kind of moral suicide; you have to give your self up."

And people resist that. We all do!! We say, "That's suicide!! You're asking me to kill myself, - to die!"

The amazing thing is, that is exactly what the gospel says. The good news is that God has found a way by which you can die without dying! Isn't that interesting?

You can let that old sin nature go, painful and hurtful as it might seem at the time, because you have somewhere else to go and that place is God Himself, who will fit you out for Heaven IN and THROUGH Jesus Christ.

There is where we go for peace of soul, and truth – absolute truth!! Jesus described Himself as "The Truth", and He described truth as a liberating friend.

John 8:32:- *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Absolute truth is the revelation of God's Word, and we must live that truth in the inner self. – that is, if we seek true freedom and happiness.

When David lived a lie – When he was guilty of great deceit, he suffered greatly. When he finally found freedom by acknowledging the truth, he wrote:- Psalm 32:1-2:- *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 How blessed is the man . . . in whose spirit there is no deceit."*

You know, real happiness is to personally know the Source of absolute truth, and to be forgiven!! It is an emotion that defies description!! It is the relief of an enormous burden lifted from our shoulders. It is the relief of a debt cancelled, and of a guilty conscience at rest and at peace. Guilt is gone, warfare has ended, peace is achieved and enjoyed at last!!

To David, it meant the forgiveness of his great transgression , the covering of his sin , the non-imputation of his iniquity and the cleansing of his spirit from terrible deceit.

To the believer today it means more than the mere covering of his sin; - that was the Old Testament concept of atonement. In this age, the believer knows that his sins are buried FOREVER in the sea of God's forgetfulness. God says that we are to lay aside all falsehood and deceit and speak the truth in love:-

Ephesians 4:15, 25:- *"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ." 25. Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbour, for we are members of one another."*

A mentally healthy person is one who is in touch with reality and relatively free of anxiety, guilt and fear. Both qualities should epitomise the Christian who renounces deception and embraces the truth. Deception is the most subtle of ALL satanic strongholds. It can easily show its ugly head in every facet of human life!!

10. DULLNESS.

Hebrews 5:11:- *Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain since you have become DULL OF HEARING."*

There may be some disagreement concerning the AUTHOR of the book of Hebrews, or even questions concerning the LOCATION of the recipients. But there is NO doubt about the spiritual condition of the readers!! Evidently, there was a problem with these readers of which the writer of Hebrews was well aware. The problem was not that HE was a dull teacher, but that THEY were dull hearers!!!! In a word, they suffered from dullness.

The Greek word for dull or slow here is *"nothros"* and it means sluggish or lazy. It refers to a condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual growth.

It would seem these people had become complacent in their faith - and this is also very easy for any of us. Complacency is usually the result of something being familiar to the point where we take it for granted. These believers started on their "backward journey" by "drifting away" from the Word of God, And then, "doubting the Word of God".

As a result, these people were now, "dull of hearing" - that is, they were unable to listen to the Word, receive it and ACT upon it. They certainly did not have the attitude of the Thessalonians which we read in 1st Thessalonians 2:13: "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

It is sadly true that our ability to understand Divine truth is very much limited by our own spiritual condition. You see, DULL EARS cannot receive DEEP TRUTHS!! To a person who's not interested in the truth of the Lord in a particular area of his or her life the truth seems to go in one ear and out the other.

The author reminded them of the need among their group for sound Bible teachers to stem the tide of iniquity and apostasy prevalent even in that day. But, the author concluded, they simply could not be used. He sadly states why: Hebrews 5:12-14:- "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This dullness was also infecting the church at Corinth.

Listen to Paul's stern admonition to them:- 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:- "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3. for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

These believers were being controlled by their old sin natures just like unbelievers are!! They were certainly NOT being led by the Holy Spirit.

To suffer dullness is to forget Hebrews 5:11:- "of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing."

Dullness of hearing can make it difficult for us to appreciate the extent of our blessings IN Christ....and it will IMPEDE our Spiritual growth.

The solution is that we need to grasp the principles and wonderful truths of the Word of God, Then, apply them to our everyday experiences in life and then press on toward spiritual maturity!!

Have YOU become dull of hearing with regard to the teaching and application of the Word of God??

11. DEADNESS.

Deadness is simply unchecked dullness. A summary of God's overall plan concerning SIN and the SINNER is that:- Whereas we were once DEAD "IN" SIN, after receiving God's marvellous grace, we now are to be DEAD "TO" SIN.

Note:-Ephesians 2:1,5,6:- *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 5. even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6. and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"*

I love Ephesians chapter 2!! When it opens, we are spiritual corpses in death valley!! When it closes, we are not only seated in Christ in the Heavens; - we form a habitation of God through His Spirit!!

In verse 1 and 2, Paul reminds his Gentile readers that before their conversion to Christianity, they were spiritually dead, depraved, diabolical and disobedient!! This means that they were lifeless toward God. They had no vital contact with Him.

Indeed, in their former spiritually dead state it was impossible for them to have ANY contact with Him!! They lived their lives as if He didn't exist. They walked according to the course of this dying world!! They conformed to the spirit of this age. They indulged in the sins of the times.

You know, the world has a mould into which it pours its devotees. It is a mould of deceit, immorality, ungodliness, selfishness, violence and rebellion. In a word, it is a mould of depravity!!

That is what the Ephesians HAD been like!! – and it was what OUR former lives were like, too!! No Cinderella ever advanced from such rags to such incredible riches as we have!! As His children, we are truly God's "filthy rags to Heavenly riches success story!!"

Romans 6:1,2,11:- *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2. Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 11. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Thus, we are to be dead to sin, but alive unto righteousness. But many believers have allowed Satan to twist these two facts, whereby they become DEAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS, and ALIVE to SIN.

In conclusion, let's have a brief look at:- James 2:17,26:- *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." 26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

James is NOT saying that we are saved by faith PLUS works!! To hold such a mistaken view would be to dishonour the finished work of redemption of Jesus Christ. If we were saved by faith PLUS works, then there would be 2 Saviours. – Jesus and ourselves!!

But the New Testament is very clear that Jesus Christ is the One and ONLY Saviour of the world!!

What James is saying is that we are NOT saved by a faith of WORDS ONLY, but by that kind of faith that RESULTS IN a life of GOOD WORKS!! In other words, WORKS are not the ROOT of salvation, - but the FRUIT!! They are not the CAUSE, but the EFFECT.

Calvin put it quite tersely. He said, " We are saved by faith ALONE, but NOT by a faith that IS alone!!"

To suffer deadness is to forget Revelation 3:1:- *"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'"*

Sardis was a church of lifeless profession. It had a reputation as a Christian assembly, but for the most part, it simply went through a formal, dull routine. It did NOT overflow with spiritual life. It did NOT sparkle with the supernatural. There was both dullness and deadness there.

Where do YOU stand today?? Today, we have noted 3 more clever devices used by Satan against us. DECEIT; DULLNESS and DEADNESS toward the living Word of God. I pray that we all will remain ever vigilant against these deadly devices so that we may glorify Jesus Christ in and through our lives.

12. DELAY.

At the great white judgment throne it may be revealed that this deadly device of Satan has been used to damn more souls to hell than any other. It has been remarked that many a man is in Hades today who meant to get saved at the eleventh hour, but who died at ten-thirty.

As Christians, we must make clear to ALL unbelievers the terrible danger of procrastination, for God has never promised to SAVE anyone tomorrow!! Both James and the author of Hebrews strongly warn of this danger.

Also, we read these words from the apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians 6:2:- *For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

When is this "acceptable time" for salvation.? A teacher once said to his Sunday school class: "Boys, the best time for a person to prepare to meet their God is the day before he dies." This at first seemed to be acceptable to the class, but then one small boy raised his hand and exclaimed:- "But teacher, sometimes a person doesn't KNOW about it 24 hours BEFORE he DIES!! What should he do then?" The teacher wisely replied: "Then boys, the NEXT best time for a person to prepare to meet God is TODAY!!"

One of the most important theological concepts in the Scriptures is the doctrine of the present tense— of TODAY.

God desires two different things from man:- That the unbeliever give his HEART to Jesus Christ TODAY because he may not see tomorrow in this world and God also desires that the SAINT give his BODY to Christ TODAY. And NOT dilly dally each day delaying what he knows God rightfully expects him to do.

Romans 6:19:- *"I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."*

Romans 12:1:- *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

God is talking about our entire lives here!! - Not just 2 hours each Sunday!! He is saying that the remaining years of our lives belong to Him!! He is asking for TOTAL COMMITMENT from us!! IF you think about it, TOTAL commitment to

Christ is our reasonable service. Since the eternal Son of God has died for ME, then the LEAST I can do is to live for Him!!

Isaac Watts' great hymn says the SAME thing:- "Love so amazing, so divine, DEMANDS my heart, my life, my ALL."

The obvious reason for what appears to be haste regarding salvation is found in James 4:13-15 and Proverbs 27:1.

Let's just look at James 4:13-15 FIRST:- *"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14. whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

James strongly denounces the SIN of self-confident, boastful planning ahead in independence of God. He pictures a businessman who has a complete plan laid out for the future.

Notice the details spelt out in verse 13:- He thought about the time - *"today, or tomorrow"*. The personnel, - *"we"*. The place, *"such and such a city"*. The duration, - *"spend a year there"*. The activity, - *"buy and sell"*. The anticipated result, *"make a profit"*.

What is missing in this picture.? He never once included GOD into his business!! Like many believers today, this man was leaving God out of his life!!

In life, it is of course necessary to make some plans for the future, but to do so in self-will excluding God is SINFUL. To say, *"we will"*, or, *"I will"* without thought to God is the essence of SIN.

Remember the 5 *"I wills"* of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:13-14.? He didn't include God in his plans at any point either!!

You know, only a FOOL drifts aimlessly with the wind and the tide. A wise man marks out his course, sets his sails, and guides the rudder until he reaches his destination. When a man wants to build a house, he first draws his plans so he knows what he is doing.

Yet, how many Christians plan their days so that they use their opportunities wisely? True, we cannot KNOW what a day may bring forth. But it is also true that a planned life can better deal with unexpected events.

Someone said, "When the pilot does not know what port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind." You know, apart from the will of God, life really is a mystery, don't you think.?

However, when you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and SEEK TO DO His will, then life starts to make sense. Even the physical world around you takes on NEW meaning. There is a simplicity and unity to your life that makes for poise and confidence. You are no longer living in a mysterious, threatening universe. You can sing, *"This is my Father's world!"*

Because time is short, the Christian should NOT delay NOR procrastinate regarding the work that God has called him or her to do. This is why Satan creates distractions for the Christian. This is why Satan utilises all of these cunning devices against the child of God!! He wants to get the believer to DELAY doing God's work until finally time on earth for that believer has run out.

How short is our time on this earth.?? Well, God uses these symbols to describe human life on earth. Symbols for human life:- As grass. (Ps. 90:5, 6; Jas. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:24). b. A vapour. (James. 4:14). A breath. (Job 7:7). Vanishing smoke. (Psalm 102:3).

When the great evangelist D.L. Moody BEGAN his ministry, he would often conclude his messages by saying:- *"Go home and think about what I've said."* One night during a crusade in Chicago, he told the people to do just that. But that night the Chicago fire broke out and some who had heard and gone home to think about it died without another chance. After that, Moody began to focus on NOW and TODAY. – and so should we!!

That's what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the Word of God. TODAY is the moment when God is speaking to your life. – Don't ignore Him and don't DELAY!! TODAY, is important because when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about your life, about your salvation, OR, about obedience in some particular area of your life. THAT is the moment when your conscience is sensitive to God!!

HOWEVER, when we ignore the Holy Spirit when we put off decision and obedience for another time, when we say "NO" to the Spirit of God, then, hardness of heart begins to set in.

One "NO" leads to another "NO" and soon this pattern of shutting God out leads to hardness of heart and stubbornness. It leads to an unwillingness to yield to God and surrender to His Voice as His Holy Word speaks to us. This hardening of the heart is proven by our everyday behaviour which God calls "rebellion".

You see, our TRUE heart condition is demonstrated by our daily behaviour. It is indeed most unwise to DELAY in heeding the gentle calling and guidance of God.

To DELAY is to forget Proverbs 27:1:- "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."

It seems that almost everyday we read of people young and old being killed in tragic circumstances not only here in Australia, but also, throughout the entire world. In the immediate period just prior to their tragic deaths, they would never have dreamed that they were about to DIE!!! They could not have conceived that they were on the verge of leaving this world.!!

You know, it is well said that death is totally indiscriminate and keeps no calendar. Young or old, it makes NO difference to death.!!! The Word of God in Hebrews 9:27 says "*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgement*".

The Bible tells us that there are at least 4 things that will occur in every person's life whether they like it or not.

[a] The first of these things is physical death. "*It is appointed for men to die once..*"

[b] The second thing is that you will one day be brought to believe that Jesus Christ is truly the eternal Son of God. and that there is salvation in no other Name.!! Acts 4:12:- "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"

[c] The third thing that you will do is bow your knee before Jesus Christ and you will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:9-11:- "*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11. and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

[d] The FINAL thing awaiting every human being is judgement. Hebrews 9:27 says "*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgement*".

You know, at any given time in our lives we are just 1 heartbeat away from eternity. What keeps us here in these mortal bodies.?? Why, just a small pump that we call a "heart."

Please understand that DEATH for EVERY human being will be either a case of:- "Graduation to Glory" for the one who wisely believed in Jesus Christ PRIOR to physical death. or, "eternal incarceration in hell" for those who rejected Him and chose to live for SELF, - and for this dying world. Which will it be for YOU.?

Each human being decides their OWN eternal destiny while alive on earth. It ultimately comes down to "*What do YOU think about Jesus Christ*". ? "WHO do you think that He is.?" "And WHY do you suppose that He permitted Himself to be tortured by the Romans and to DIE on the cross.?" Did He just want to die as a martyr for a lost cause, - or could it be that He died for YOU as your substitute. so that through faith in Him you could be fitted out for Heaven and at last – reconciled back into a wonderful and meaningful relationship with GOD.??

While Faith in Jesus Christ as YOUR Saviour and faith in His redemptive work on the Cross assures you of eternal life on the other hand, rejection of Christ has appalling and eternal consequences.!!

The most eminent and reliable authority on the subject of death - in fact, the only absolute Authority, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is because He is singularly unique in His resurrection, - and HIS TOMB IS EMPTY.!! Unlike the bones of ALL of the founders of other religions which are still in their graves., The great and undeniable historical truth is that Christ's tomb is EMPTY.!!!

I would like you to think about just how indiscriminate death really is. AND, how very important it is that we settle the matter of our eternal destiny without delay and while there is STILL time.

Let's now look at a man who DIDN'T do this:- Let's listen to the example that Jesus Himself gave about the rich, foolish FARMER. We pick this story up in Luke 12:16-20:- *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17. "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18. "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20. "But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

Jesus made it clear that RICHES are NOT the most important thing in life. Because of an exceptionally good crop, this farmer was faced with what appeared to him a very distressing problem. He did not know what to do with all of the excess grain.!! ALL of his barns and silos were crammed full to capacity. This land-owner was embarrassed by riches.!!

At no stage did he consider the possibility of utilising his bumper crops for the benefit of the poor and the needy. Then he had a brainstorm. His problem was solved.!! He decided in his greed to pull down his barns and build bigger ones.!!

18. "*So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.'*"

The thought that he could actually DIE in the meantime never occurred to him!! As soon as his new, large barns were built he felt sure that he could then retire and enjoy the rest of his life in luxury!! On the assurance of a large crop, this foolish man was ready to retire. He thought that he "had it made.!!

19. *'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."*

BUT when he began to think of time as HIS, he CRASHED into GOD to his eternal ruin!! He had made several false and foolish assumptions. He assumed that the SOUL could be easily satisfied with goods and material possessions. He assumed that these goods would last for many, many, years. And he assumed that he would LIVE long enough to enjoy them.!!

However, God told him that he would DIE that very night!! 20. *"But God said to him, 'You fool!! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

In Job 27:8 we read:- *"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain much, if God takes away his life? {"For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off. When God requires his soul ?"}*

The rich man had not counted on the abrupt summons that called him to face God and to leave to others, the property, assets and goods that he had so carefully amassed.

I am reminded of Jim Elliott's words:- *"He is NO fool to GIVE what he cannot keep to GAIN what he cannot LOSE."*

Someone has defined a fool as one whose plans END at the grave.!!

13. DISCORD.

It has been rightly observed that many Bible-believing churches have been split through troublemakers having the wrong focus in life. That is to say the tragic cause of a split is usually discord rather than doctrine.

Some trouble-maker invariably begins his or her deadly gossip in a local church. They do this by raising questions and doubts in the minds of people, - doubts that otherwise would have never been entertained.

How effectively Satan uses this tool, and how painful it will be at the BEMA Judgment Seat of Christ for these carnal sowers of discord.

To sow discord is to forget Proverbs 6:16-19:- *These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18. a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, 19. a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.*

- (1) Seven things that God hates:-
- (a) a proud look
- (b) a lying tongue
- (c) hands that shed innocent blood
- (d) a heart that devises wicked plans
- (e) feet that are swift in running to evil,
- (f) a false witness who speaks lies.
- [g] one who sows discord among brethren.

The formula, *"These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven,"* may mean that the list is specific, but, not exhaustive OR, - it may indicate that the 7th is the worst of all!! And that one is against the believer *"who sows discord among brethren."*

"A proud look" You know, it has been said that pride is dust deifying itself. The valet of an emperor said:- "I cannot deny that my master was vain. He had to be the central figure in everything!! If he went to a christening, he wanted to be the baby, If he went to a wedding, he wanted to be the bride. If he went to a funeral, he wanted to be the corpse.!!"

"A lying tongue" The tongue was created to sing praises to the Lord and to glorify Him. It was intended that the tongue of man would build OTHERS up and encourage them. To LIE is to pervert its use for that which is dishonourable and base.

Is it ever right for a believer to LIE.?? The answer is that God cannot lie, and He cannot give the privilege to anyone else.

Psalm 141:3:- "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips." Once evil words go out we cannot bring them back. Who knows where they will go? You may straighten this out with the Lord but there is NO WAY we can retrieve what we have said.

"hands that shed innocent blood," Every human life is of infinite value to God. He proved this by paying an infinite price at Calvary for our redemption. The institution of capital punishment in Genesis 9:6 reflects God's clear attitude toward murder.

"a heart that devises wicked plans" This, of course, refers to the mind that is always plotting some EVIL. The Lord Jesus listed some of these wicked imaginations in Mark 7:21-22:- *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22. "thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.*

"feet that are swift in running to evil," God hates not only the MIND or HEART that plans the evil, but the FEET that are eager to carry it out. These troublemakers can hardly constrain themselves from running from person to person, and house to house gossiping and spreading RUMOURS and TALES about OTHER people!!

"a false witness who speaks lies" In this verse, it refers to a matter of public testimony in a court of law .As against the term, *"lying tongue"* which we saw in verse 17 which was more of a matter of everyday conversation.

"one who sows discord among brethren." The striking thing here is that God ranks the person who causes divisions among brethren with murderers, liars and perjurers!!

How many of these 7 SINS can you associate with the 7 false trials of Jesus and with His crucifixion.??

Firstly, there were two legal systems that condemned Christ:- The Jewish and the Roman, the very two which underlie modern jurisprudence.

The arrest and proceedings under Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin were under JEWISH law. Those under Pilate and Herod were under ROMAN law.

The Jewish trial was ILLEGAL in several particulars:- The judge was NOT impartial and did NOT protect the accused.

There is NO evidence that the quorum of 23 judges took part in the arrest; and they were hostile. (Mt. 26:62, 63).

2. The arrest was unlawful because it was carried out under NO FORMAL accusation.

3. In criminal trials all sessions had to be started and carried on only during the DAY. Night sessions were illegal!!

4. A verdict of guilty could NOT be rendered on the SAME day as the conclusion of the trial. It had to be given on the NEXT day!!

5. The search for hostile testimony was ILLEGAL.

Matthew 26:59:- *"Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death,"*

Mark 14:56:- *"For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree."*

John 11:53:- *"Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death."*

6. NO accused could be convicted on his own evidence, - yet His accusers feverishly sought replies and admissions from Christ to condemn Him.

Matthew 26:63-66:- *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64. Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! 66. "What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death."*

John 18:19:- *"The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine."*

7. No valid legal evidence was presented against Him.

After Pilate declared Christ innocent, his subsequent acts were ALL contrary to the letter and spirit of Roman LAW!!

In this section we have seen that Satan will take every opportunity to use many cunning devices and strategies against the child of God. We have looked at the danger of delay and procrastination both for the believer and unbeliever alike. And we noted the danger of distortion, gossip and troublemaking within the church.

14. DEFILEMENT.

The dictionary definition of defilement is To make something filthy or polluted.

Several hundred young people once stood at the altar of the famed Moody Memorial Church in Chicago to answer the call for full-time Christian service.

The speaker, Dr. Vance Havner, looked down at this group and uttered a rather strange statement. He said: "Young people, God is pleased that you have come to this prayer altar. But do NOT pray, 'Lord, USE me.'" Havner then went on to explain his statement. "You need not ask Him to use you. He'll do that all right!! In fact, He'll wear you out, for there's not enough of you to go around as it is!! What you should pray, therefore, is 'Lord, MAKE me USABLE.'"

God does NOT require golden vessels, nor silver containers, but He insists upon CLEAN ones. And He uses "prepared" ones!!

A believer who defiles himself with the things of this world can never be used by God, regardless of his education, ability, energy, or experience. A believer can defile themselves through a multitude of things.

To name just a few of them:- Mixing with the wrong crowd, Trying to "fit in" with this world and with people who are naturally antagonistic toward Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Going to the wrong places. Watching the wrong type of videos or T.V. programmes. Focusing on things and people in this world instead of focusing on Jesus Christ and on the Word of God.

To become defiled is to forget 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17. If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*

Billy Graham in his book, *"World Aflame"*, tells a story about Dwight Eisenhower. During his term as President, he was holidaying in Denver. It came to his attention that a six-year old boy named Paul Haley was dying of an incurable cancer. This boy had one dream and that was someday to meet the President of the United States. Eisenhower said to one of his aides, "Let's go see Paul Haley."

They got into the presidential limousine and they drove over one August Sunday morning to the home of Paul Haley who had no idea that he was coming. Flags on the fenders were flying as this black limousine drove up escorted by loads of security personnel. Doors flew open, and out walked the President, who knocked on the door.

Donald Haley, the father, wearing blue jeans, an *old* dirty shirt, and a day's growth of beard, opened the door. He said, "Yes, can I help ya?" The President said, "Is Paul here? Please tell him that the President would like to see him." And little Paul, to his amazement, walked around his father's legs and stood and looked at into the face of the man he admired most. Eisenhower knelt down, shook his little hand, and took him out to see the presidential limousine.

Before he said good-bye, he hugged little Paul Haley. They shook hands again and he left. It was an exciting time for everyone, except Donald Haley, the father. He said, "How can I ever forget standing there dressed like I was in those jeans and an old, dirty shirt and an unshaven face to meet the President of the United States."

One of these days we will stand before the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. How tragic it would be to meet the Lord and be ashamed of the life and the lifestyle that we had lived apart from Him. How tragic to have loved this material world and the things in it to the exclusion of faithfully serving Jesus Christ!!

The apostle Paul discussed the believer's appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ in 1st Corinthians 3:10-15. Paul then went on to give a series of three warnings in 1st Corinthians 3:16-23 to believers. It is like Paul is reminding us how we should live in light of tomorrow.

1 John 3:2-3 says:- *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He (Christ) IS pure."*

John is saying that IF a person really believes that one day that he will see Jesus Christ face-to-face and any day could stand before Him, it should impact on the way that we live.

2 Peter 3:10-11:- *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,"*

Every material thing in this world has the stamp of oblivion upon it. The things in this world of which men boast, - the things in this world for which men live, - these things are all passing away into total oblivion!! To live for material things is to live for the temporary.

Common sense should tell us to turn from the tinsel and toys of this world and live in holiness and godliness. It is a simple matter of living for eternity rather than time, of emphasizing the spiritual rather than the material, of choosing the permanent over the passing.

Peter speaks of the kind of people we ought to be in light of our Lord's coming, and in light of our meeting of the Lord.

In much the same way, Paul reminds us of our future and then gives certain warnings about the present.

Let's notice those three warnings written in 1 Corinthians 3:16-23. *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17. If anyone (false teachers) defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*

[Notice Verses 16-17] ... Paul gives us a warning about defiling ourselves. He does so in light of one of greatest truths declared in the Bible. The Old Testament saints would never have imagined that Almighty God would one day set up an earthly dwelling place for Himself WITHIN human bodies on earth.

The believer is called *"the temple of God."* There are two words in the New Testament that are used to speak of the temple. One is used to encompass the entire Temple. The other is used to speak specifically of the Holy of Holies.

The word that Paul used is the one that speaks of the Most Holy Place. – The Holy of Holies!! That was the room that was an earthly dwelling place for God. Paul tells us that the Spirit of God actually dwells IN the believer. We are the present Holy of Holies on earth!!! We are the present earthly dwelling place for God!!

As you look into the Bible you find that God has HAD three primary dwelling places on EARTH. There was His picture house that was the Tabernacle and Temple. There was His perfect house that was the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, there is His purchased house that is every SAVED person.

This is a most amazing truth!! God lives IN me!!! This is indeed an astounding truth. As a child of God, I am the awesome Creator's earthly dwelling place!! He lives IN me by the person of the Holy Spirit.

As I said earlier, the word that is used to speak of us as God's Temple is the word that speaks of the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy as it was often called. It was so named because it was the room in which God's presence dwelt!! He is a God of holiness, therefore it was called the Most Holy Place.

Paul said, *"For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."* Paul was demanding holiness on the part of every believer since we are the dwelling place of God. Sadly, many Christians choose to forget that holiness is the everyday business and obligation of every Christian.

It is an everyday business of every Christian because God lives IN us and we are His Temple. It is an everyday obligation of every Christian because they have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and are owned by Him body, soul and spirit.

I Peter 1:15-16 says:- *"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16. because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

It is for this reason we are to guard ourselves from being defiled. It is also for this reason that we must *"bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"*

Leviticus 15:31:- *"Thus you shall keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them."* Leviticus 15:31 tells us that in the Old Testament, DEATH was the penalty for defiling the Temple.

Paul tells us that if any man defile the Temple of God, which is our body, him shall God destroy. The word "defile" and "destroy" are the SAME word. They speak of "spoiling, ruining, or corrupting." Paul is saying that when we take holiness lightly, God takes it seriously!! Instead of foolishly imitating this ungodly, dying, corrupt world with its ever-changing fads and fashions, our lives should reproduce the holy character of the One who called us and saved us.

I think of the little song that children often sing in Sunday School:-

*"Be careful little ears what you hear.
Be careful little eyes what you see.
Be careful little tongue what you say.
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love,
So be careful little tongue what you say."*

I want to remind you that God is not only looking down on us, He is living IN us. Therefore we should be careful that we be not defiled by flirting with this world, and/or, with our old sin nature!!

What instructions does God give us regarding avoiding this subtle trap of defilement?? Is there a solution that can help the believer??

God gives us much good advice in His blessed instruction manual, the Word of God. Here then is what we are instructed to do:-

Romans 12:1:- *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

Our loving heavenly Father, through Paul extends this invitation to His children. How is the invitation offered?

"I beseech you." Paul does not issue a curt command, but rather a pleading request. You see, loving service simply cannot be commanded. This is the language of grace and the method of the apostle. (See also 1 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:1; 1 Tim. 2:1.

What is the believer invited to do? He is to present his body *"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."* Note:-It is to be his **BODY**. God is not primarily interested in our time, talents, or money. The only gift which satisfies the Redeemer Creator is the body of His redeemed creature!! (See 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 8:5.)

Next, we note it is to be his *living* body. For some believers it may even be easier for them to DIE for the Lord than to LIVE for Him!!

Finally, we note that it is to be a *separated* (holy) living body.

Why is the believer invited to do this? Because he has already experienced God's mercy and grace!!

Have you noticed that ALL other faiths make sacrifice the condition or root of mercy, - BUT Christianity makes it the flower. (Contrast this with 1 Ki. 18:26-29; 2 Ki. 3:26, 27.)

To the *sinner*, God says in Isaiah 1:18:- *"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."*

The proper and practical thing for the unbeliever to do is give God his heart.

(b) To the saint, God says, *"present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* God is talking about our entire lives here!! - Not just 2 hours each Sunday!! He is saying that the remaining years of our lives belong to Him!!

He is asking for TOTAL COMMITMENT from us!! IF you think about it, TOTAL commitment to Christ IS our reasonable service. Since the eternal Son of God has died for ME, then the LEAST I can do is to live for Him!! After all, Jesus Christ gave to the Father and to us His total commitment!!

What are the results of obeying this invitation to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God.? The believer will NOT be conformed (moulded) from without by the world. The believer will be transformed from within by the renewing of his mind.

The word "transformed" is *metamorpho* in the Greek, whence we get our word *metamorphosis*, that biological change whereby a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The same word is used in the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:2. (See also 2 Cor. 3:18.)

The renewing of the mind mentioned in Romans 12:2 is very likely a reference to constant Bible study and prayer. (Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10).

Ephesians 4:23:- *"and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,"*

Colossians 3:10:- *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

This daily renewing is the only safeguard against failure. (1 Cor. 9:24-27). The believer will thus be able to discern and perform God's perfect will for his life. The believer will see himself as God sees him, and will not *"think of himself more highly than he ought to think."* (Rom.12:3).

Daniel Defoe called pride "the first peer and president of hell." Indeed, it was pride that transformed Lucifer into Satan, and it was pride (*"you will be like God,"*) that caused our first parents to sin. (Gen. 3).

Pride opens the door to every other sin. Why??

Because when we are more concerned with our reputation than our character, there is no end to the things we will do just to make ourselves "look good" before others.

15. DEFAME.

The dictionary definition of Defame is "To attack the good reputation of someone."

How often are Christians guilty of criticizing or belittling other believers. In fact, some of the most cutting remarks a child of God may receive are at the hands of another child of God!! We should be very careful in guarding against this satanic D, for ALL believers will gain or lose rewards at the bema judgment on account of it.

Hebrews 6:10:-*"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."*

Matthew 10:42:-*"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

To defame someone is to forget Psalm 101:5:-*"Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure."*

16. DISOBEDIENCE.

There are two famous men by the name of Saul in the Bible. One in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. A very profitable study can be made by comparing and contrasting these two men.

Both were from the tribe of Benjamin. (1 Sam. 9:2; Phil. 3:5).

One was tall and impressive, - the other short and unimpressive. (1 Sam. 9:2; 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:13, 14).

The first began as God's friend but ended up as his enemy, - while the second started as his enemy but wound up as God's friend. (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:6, 7; 28:6; Acts 9:1; 2 Tim. 4:18).

One went to the witch of Endor in the hour of his death, while the other turned to the Word of God.

1 Samuel 28:5-7:- *When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. 6. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets. 7. Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor."*

1 Samuel 31:3-4:- *"Now the battle became intense against Saul; and the archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. 4. Then Saul said to his armour bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armour bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it."*

2 Timothy 4:6; 7; 13:- *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 13. "Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come and the books, especially the parchments."*

What really made the difference between these two men? The answer is tragically simple. One was disobedient, the other was obedient.

1 Samuel 15:22, 23:- *Then Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. 23. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."*

Acts 26:12-19: *"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13. "at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. 14. "And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15. "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16. 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17. 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18. 'to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' 19. "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,"*

To disobey is to forget Romans 6:14-18:- *" For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16. Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? 17. But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*

To disobey God is to also reject the Holy spirit's guidance in our lives. Romans 8:14:-*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."*

A young pilot had just passed the point of no return when the weather changed for the worse. Visibility dropped to a matter of metres as fog descended to the earth. Putting total trust in the cockpit instruments was a new experience to him, for the ink was still wet on the certificate verifying that he was qualified for instrument flying.

The landing worried him the most. His destination was a crowded metropolitan airport he wasn't familiar with. In a few minutes he would be in radio contact with the tower. Until then, he was alone with his thoughts. His instructor had practically forced him to memorize the rule book. He didn't care for it at the time, but now he was thankful.

Finally he heard the voice of the air traffic controller. "I'm going to put you on a holding pattern," the controller radioed. Great!!...thought the pilot. However, he knew that his safe landing was in the hands of this person. He had to draw upon his previous instructions and training, and trust the voice of an air traffic controller he couldn't SEE!!

Aware that this was no time for pride, he informed the controller, "This is not a seasoned pro up here. I would appreciate any help you could give me." "You've got it!" he heard back. For the next 45 minutes, the controller gently guided the pilot through the blinding fog.

As course and altitude corrections came periodically, the young pilot realized the controller was guiding him around obstacles and away from potential collisions. With the words of the rule book firmly placed in his mind, and with the gentle voice of the controller, he landed safely at last.

The Holy Spirit guides us through the maze of life much like that air traffic controller. The controller assumed that the young pilot understood the instructions of the flight manual. His guidance was based on that!!

Such is the case with the Holy Spirit:-He can guide us IF we have a knowledge of God's Word and His WILL established in our MINDS.

This example helps us to understand more clearly the message from God in Romans 12:2:- *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

The Bible is the Mind of Jesus Christ. As we begin to take it into our minds they begin to become renewed and we begin to see things from God's perspective and not from our own.