

01/01/08

Luke 18:8 **WILL HE FIND FAITH IN YOU?**

As we start the New Year, let's remind ourselves that the return of the Lord is very close at hand. The signs of the times are everywhere, and we would be fools not to keep this in the forefront of our thinking. But as we start 2008, there is no better time to meditate on the fact that Jesus is coming back, and it might be this year! And if it is this year, are you prepared to meet Him? Are all your spiritual affairs in order the way the Bible says they should be? Is Jesus truly the Lord of your life, in every area of your life? And, as He says in today's verse, if He were to come back TODAY, would He find faith on the earth? What does that mean? It means He expects you and I to be walking by faith and not by sight, everyday until He returns.

When He comes, will He find your heart full of faith? Or, will He find your heart full of doubt and fear for the future? Ask yourself today, New Year's day, if you are really walking in faith with God! Go ahead and be honest with yourself, because God already knows! You might just as well be honest and objectively assess your situation because until you do, you'll never be able to move forward and improve upon your faith. So, let me be one of the first to wish you a very happy New Year, but, let me also be one of the first to remind you that Jesus is coming soon, and you are responsible for living your life in light of that fact! Have a great 2008! Be strong! Stay strong!

01/02/08

Matthew 26:25 **YOU SAID SO!**

As we start the New Year, let's recommit ourselves to wise, scriptural management of our mouths! Proverbs 18:21 tells us that death and life is in the power of the tongue. James 3:2 says that if we control the tongue, we can control the whole body. Hundreds of other verses say the same thing, so if we really want to make 2008 the best year of our lives in Christ, it MUST start with a commitment to doing a better job at managing our mouths! So my word for you today is the same word I give myself: **THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK!**

Most Christians speak and then think, that's why they end up of having to repent of so much to God! Proverbs 10:19 says that in the multitude of words there wants not sin. In other words, the more you exercise an undisciplined tongue, the more you'll have to repent of later! Don't let that be you any longer! Now, right now, as we begin a brand new year in service to our Lord, let's make a quality decision to get control of our tongues, and use our mouth ONLY for the glory of God. In today's verse, Jesus told Pilate that what he had just said would come to pass **BECAUSE HE SAID IT!** That's the way it always works friend. Jesus said as much in Mark 11:22-24, when He said that we would (and will) have **WHATEVER WE SAY!** In 2008, you will have what you say, so be careful about what it is you're saying, ok? Think before you speak. Make sure your words are giving God something to work with, rather than giving the devil something to work with.

01/03/08

John 19:30 **IT IS FINISHED!**

When Jesus died on the cross, the work of fulfilling the Old Testament law was done. Up until that time, no man had successfully lived their entire life without committing sin, and thus, violating the Law of God. Remember, if you sinned in only one area, you were guilty of sinning in every area as far as God was concerned (James 2:10). So, when Jesus came, he came to fulfill the Old Testament law, and by doing that, making the way possible for God to institute the New Testament, which is the one we live under today. And now, under the New Testament, the ONLY law you have to keep is the law to love! That's it! Everything else is finished, and all the penalties for all the sins listed and mentioned in the

scriptures has been paid for through the shed blood of Jesus. This was the message that Paul was commissioned to share, and the message which got him into so much trouble with the religious crowd. And even today, we still have that same kind of religious resistance when you try to show people that under the New Testament, the ONLY law we are to be charged to keep is the law of love.

Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, outlined this truth so well in the book of Romans. In Romans 13:8-10, we see the classic verses that tell us that if we walk in love, we fulfill the law. Loving your neighbor as yourself takes care of everything else! And in Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus Himself told us how to fulfill the Old Testament law. We love God with all of our hearts first, then we love our neighbors as we love ourselves. That's it! As Paul said, this kind of loving works no harm towards his neighbor, and shows no rebellion towards God. Therefore, if you fulfill these two commandments, you've fulfilled them all! So as we move into the new year 2008, let's remind ourselves that the Old Testament law is finished. It's done away with, and now, in the New Testament, the only law that matters is the law of love. Some people think that when Jesus said "It is finished", that meant the plan of redemption was completed. But that's not true. When Jesus said those words, He still had not yet died, and had not yet gone into Hades to suffer for those 3 days of torment at the hands of the devil (see Acts 2:31). No friend, our redemption was not finalized and finished until those 3 days were over, the penalty for our sins paid, and Jesus had risen from the dead, 3 days AFTER the crucifixion, where he said these words "It is finished". So, if you make your one great quest in life, to walk in love, you'll automatically fulfill all the rest of the commandments found in the Bible. Praise God! I don't know about you, but that thrills my soul. No longer do I have to be so concerned about all the little things that I do right or wrong. If I focus my time and attention on developing the love of God within me (Romans 5:5), then everything else will work itself out. It will work out for me, and work out for you too!

01/04/08

Matthew 20:21 WHAT DO YOU WANT?

As we enter a new year, what do you want? What are your goals, objectives and priorities? Have you thought about them? Have you brought them before the Lord in prayer? These are things you should be doing at this time of year, right at the beginning of the new year. And Jesus is asking you the same question He was asking in our verse today, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Or, what is it that you want? You know, many Christians have not simply because they haven't asked! I know that sounds almost ridiculously simple, but it's true! I know in my own life, there have been things I've known that I need or want from God, but for whatever reason, I just never got around to asking Him for these things. And guess what? As a result of that, I never got what I needed! In John 14:14, Jesus tells us to ask Him for whatever it is we want or need, and it shall be given. But you have to ask! So ask yourself today, have you really asked God for the things you need or want, or just made the assumption that because He knows you have these needs, that He's out there working to bring them into your life?

My friend, God WANTS to bless you, and meet your needs. He's not holding back from you. He wants to bless you, and give you the desires of your heart (Psalms 37:4). But on the other hand, He wants you to understand that His desire is to work WITH you, not apart from you. And therefore, He wants us to constantly realize the importance of asking for the things we need, as a way of reminding ourselves that everything comes from His hand in the first place. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to come BOLDLY to God's throne to obtain the help we need in times of need. So, if you haven't asked for the things you need or want in the new year, how about taking time today and, in prayer, asking the Lord for whatever it is you have need of. One final thought though. Make sure your requests are in line with His Word and will for your life. 1 John 5:14,15 says that when we ask, we can have every assurance our requests are heard and answered IF our requests are in line with God's Word and will for our lives. So study God's Word, and

you'll know what His will is, for His Word is His will. And, for those specific areas in your life, make sure they agree with God's plan and purpose for your life, and then ask without shame, hesitation or apology!

01/05/08

Proverbs

WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING!

As we start a new year, I want to take time over the next few days to talk with you about the importance of setting proper priorities. There are many great topics and subjects to study and learn about in the Word of God, but its always important to major on the things that God Himself says is most important. And the first of those spiritual priorities mentioned in the Word that I'd like to talk with you about is wisdom. In our verse today, we see that wisdom is the PRINCIPAL thing. That means its most important. God expects us to GET wisdom, and KEEP wisdom. Because wisdom is the principal thing, God tells us to get it and hold on to it. And where does all this begin? By developing a proper and healthy fear of the Lord. Proverbs 9:10 says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So if wisdom is the most important thing, you must have the fear of the Lord in your heart and life because that is the beginning of wisdom. You can go any further until you develop the fear of the Lord. Does that mean we are to cower in fear of God? No course not! Fearing God is not being afraid of God. Fearing God is respecting Him for Who He is, and living life in light of that fact. Honoring, respecting, serving and obeying God are the ways we fear Him. Are you fearing the Lord in those ways?

So we start with the fear of the Lord, but that is only the beginning. From there, we begin to build upon the solid foundation of fearing the Lord, and the wisdom of God becomes more and more the principal thing in terms of Bible study and day-to-day lifestyle. I suggest you read and study the book of Proverbs. That book, more than any other, contains information and instruction concerning the wisdom of God. If you want to be wise, read and apply Proverbs in your life. So if wisdom is to be the principal thing in your life, you'll need to get into the book of Proverbs on a daily basis, so that you feed upon the rich instruction concerning wisdom that God places in that book. Another book to study is the book James. The book of James is often compared to Proverbs, and its called the New Testament book of Proverbs by many. And what will you find if you study these two books? You'll find that wisdom is simply knowing how to manage your mouth! If you want to become wise, you must place a priority on managing your tongue, and getting control of your conversation. I suggest you take a highlighter of some kind, and highlight every verse in Proverbs and James which talk about wisdom, and see for yourself that wisdom is all about disciplining your tongue! James 1:5 says that if you lack wisdom (if you aren't very good at controlling your tongue), ask of God, who gives wisdom freely and doesn't hold back. Well, how is God going to give wisdom freely? Through His Word. He's already given you the Word, so now its up to you to open the Bible and take the time to feed on the principals found in it. So, as we start the new year, prioritize according to the Word of God. Wisdom: get it and protect it! It's the principal thing!

01/06/08

1 Corinthians 13:13

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE!

We are looking at the things in the Bible that God calls priorities. As we start the new year, we must re-group, and make sure the lion's share of our time in Bible study and application centers around the things God says are most important. Yesterday, we looked at wisdom, which Proverbs 4:7 says is the principal thing. Today, we look at Paul's classic statement to the Corinthians. In the New Testament, we have three foundational elements: faith, hope and love. Of those three, the greatest is love! Not faith, and not hope. They're important, but not as important as love. Why is love more important the faith or hope? Because faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1), but faith can only work by love. You

see, you start with hope, which leads to faith, but faith can't be energized and put to work until love becomes the driving force in your heart. You can have all the hope in the world, and faith to move mountains, but without love, your faith won't work and your hopes will go unrealized.

According to the Amplified Translation of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 14:1 tells us to make love our **ONE GREAT AIM AND QUEST IN LIFE**. And if that's how God feels about the importance of walking in love, you should definitely make this a priority for 2008! Walking in love doesn't just happen. You have to **PRACTICE** walking in love, and to do that, you have to take the time to meditate on the lover verses, as found throughout the New Testament. Passages like 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 are classic verses you should be reading, confessing and practicing **EVERY DAY**. Just like lawyers practice law, and doctors practice medicine, Christians should be practicing love. And what does it mean to "practice?" It means we study about love, then work at loving unlovely people! No, it isn't easy. If it was easy, more people would be doing a better job of walking in love. The fact is, the love of God is **ALREADY** inside of you by virtue of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. But, you have to exercise that love in order for it to become the dominate force that controls your life. It doesn't happen just because you're Christian. It happens because you decide it will, and make it a priority to perfect and develop the ability to let God's love dominate you. It's a priority worth pursuing, so don't wait another day. Decide today to make love the one great quest and aim of your life!

01/07/08

John 15:17

THE COMMAND WE MUST KEEP

Once again, as we focus on finding and fulfilling spiritual priorities in 2008, we find ourselves being reminded of God's **COMMAND** to love one another. Notice, this is not a command to love unbelievers! It's a command to love fellow brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. The greatest way you can witness to your unsaved loved ones, fellow students, friends or co-workers is by doing this, walking in love towards fellow saints in the body of Christ. And as you have probably found out by now, if you've been saved for longer than 2 days, its not an easy thing to do. Its hard, its challenging, and it can only be done with much prayer, Bible study, meditation and practice! The love walk is our practice in life, in the same way a doctor practices medicine, or a lawyer practices law. Christians practice loving. First, loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Second, we're to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37). Jesus said all the law and prophets hang on this **COMMANDEMENT**.

And so when we take that commandment of God's, and bring it into the New Testament, we see Jesus specifically telling Christians to practice loving each other. **BY THIS**, He said, shall **ALL MEN** (that means unbelievers as well as believers) know that we are truly disciples of Christ. Not by tithing, or by church attendance, or by doing good works, or by going on the Missions Field, or anything else. In this area alone, are we to prove to the world that we're truly disciples of Christ. Loving other believers! Of course, you've found out that not everybody who claims to be Christian is someone you enjoy being with. That's where spiritual discipline and training come into play. That's where you must **PRACTICE** loving people inside the church who aren't yet as sanctified, mature and focused upon spiritual priorities as you are! Fact is, that no matter where we gather to "fellowship", we're always going to be surrounded by others who aren't necessarily people we enjoy being with. Sure, we'll have our own circle of friends, the people who we enjoy being with and keeping company with. But what about all the others? Your responsibility is to obey the Lord's commandment, and love them **UNCONDITIONALLY**. No pre-requisites to meet, no strings attached. If you're going to really advance and triumph in 2008, you've got to set this as one of your major priorities for the new year. I've purposed it will so in my life, how about you?

01/08/08

Ecclesiastes 12:13

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

Since the beginning of the new year, we've been looking at what the Bible calls spiritual priorities. There's no better time to discover what God considers to be most important. As we make our "New Year's Resolutions", we need to know what are, and what are not, priorities as far as God is concerned. First, we saw that the acquisition of wisdom is one of God's priorities for us. Next, we looked at the importance of walking in love, and especially towards fellow believers. And today, we will look at what Solomon wrote at the end of Ecclesiastes. After writing Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, being blessed of God with more wisdom than any other man (except Jesus), he finishes up with this classic summation. What does he mean when he talks about the "conclusion of the whole matter"? He's talking about what really matters, and what's really important. And what is the conclusion of the whole matter? After all the wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, what's the final, all-consuming revelation he comes to? Here it is: **FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.** Isn't that amazing! So simple, and yet, so all-encompassing.

My friend, we can read from Genesis to Revelation, and study the Bible our whole lives, but in the end, it all comes down to this, the conclusion of the **WHOLE** (not a piece of the matter, but the whole thing) matter. All of man's dealings with God are summed up in this one statement. First, fear God. Second, keep His commandments. That's it! The word "fear" doesn't mean we cower in fear, shaking and trembling for fright when coming before God. The word fear here simply means to honor, respect and reverence God for Who He is, the Almighty One. The all-sufficient One. The omni-everything One. We fear God because He's **GOD**, and we're not! He's the Creator, and we're the created. So we respect Him, honor Him, and pay Him the reverence due His Name. Period. He is our source of life on every level, so we fear Him. He sustains us on every level, so we fear Him. He's an all-consuming fire, so we fear Him. And, because of all of that, when He gives us a command, we're to obey. That's how we fear Him the most, but doing what He tells us to do. In our last few devotionals, we've talked about the importance of walking in love. Why? Because it's a commandment, not a request. And, that particular commandment covers all the other commandments found in the Bible. Do that one, and you don't need to be concerned with any of the others listed prior to our Lord's coming and instruction (John 13:34,35/Romans 13:8-10). So as we start our new year 2008, I encourage you to meditate on this statement. Do you want to please God, honor God, and respect Him? Then do what this verse says to do!

01/09/08

Ecclesiastes 12:13

SETTING YOUR YEARLY PRIORITIES

Yesterday, we began a look at this verse, as we are talking about setting spiritual priorities for the new year 2008. If you love the Lord, call Him your God and soon-coming King, and seek to please Him while here on earth (2 Corinthians 5:9), then you need to meditate on this verse, and make sure you're a doer of this verse, not just a reader of it. What is the conclusion of everything (the whole matter)? Fear God first, and keep His commandments second. Period. That's it. Nothing more needs to be done or said about it. How do you fear God? By hiding under the table everytime He calls your name? No, of course not! You fear God by doing your best to always remember that He's Almighty God, and you're just you! The Bible says God upholds (hold together) **ALL** things by the Word of His power. Fear Him for that! Respect Him for that! And when you come into His presence, do what Psalms 100 says to do. Come before Him with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Why? Because of Who He is.

You know, if you were granted an audience with the Pope at the Vatican, you wouldn't just stroll in wearing a pair of cut-offs and flip-flop sandals! No, you'd take time to properly prepare yourself for that meeting. Why? Because He's the Pope. Regardless of whether or not his position and title is

scriptural is a moot point at that moment, he happens to be the most influential man on the planet. More people's lives are directly influenced by that man than anyone else on earth. So, you'd recognize that fact, and give him the honor his position deserves. In a way, you'd be fearing him. The same would be true if you had the chance to visit with the President of the United States in the Oval Office at the White House. You wouldn't just "show up" in a tank top shirt and blue jeans. You'd honor the man, and the office he stands in. In a way, you'd be fearing him. Well, how much more should we do that with God? The Pope, our President, and anyone else on earth, are just men. God is God, so when you come into His presence, be sure you come with singing, thanksgiving, praise and worship. By doing so, you honor Him, fear Him and show Him the respect and reverence due His name. It should be one of your priorities this year to understand this, and re-adjust the way you relate and fellowship with your Heavenly Father. Yes, He's our ABBA (our Daddy), and wants us to love Him that way, but do so in context. He's our Daddy, but He's also the Supreme Being who holds this universe together with words of His power.

01/10/08

Ecclesiastes 12:14 **JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING!**

We've been looking at the importance of setting and keeping spiritual priorities in the New Year 2008. This passage from Ecclesiastes shows us the reasons why we need to set and keep God's priorities. Judgment day is coming! I like how the New Living Translation renders this verse. It says **GOD WILL JUDGE US FOR EVERYTHING WE DO, INCLUDING EVERY SECRET THING, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD.** Starting out a New Year would be a great time to be reminded of this fact. No matter what, and no matter who knows or doesn't know, God sees everything, and knows the intent of our heart when we say or do whatever it is we say or do. Nobody gets away with **ANYTHING**, and that includes you and me! You see friend, setting priorities is for covering your bases in two worlds at the same time. This world now, and the eternal, spiritual world to come. When you establish God's priorities in your life, and make them your own, good things take place for you down here, and on judgment day, you'll be able to stand before the Lord with a clear conscience, unashamed and confident in the outcome.

In Romans 14:10, we're told that all Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Sinners will stand judgment at the Great White Throne (Revelations 20:11), but believers will be judged by the Head of the Church, Jesus. And I don't know about you, but I want that day and that moment to be a pleasant experience! I don't just want to make it into heaven. I want my life to count for something important in God's eyes. I want Him to find me pleasing in His sight, and qualified to receive the rewards waiting for them who overcome. To do that, I must find, establish and practice being a doer of God's Word when it comes to the things He says are most important in the Bible. Spiritual priorities. So when the devil comes around and tries to discourage you from doing the things God says are most important, you tell him to go take a hike. Renew your mind to this verse today, and remind yourself that all the discipline you exercise today will pay off handsomely some day in heaven when you stand before the Lord, and He says to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

01/11/08

Matthew 25:18 **ARE YOU HIDING YOUR TALENTS?**

This is a marvelous teaching from Jesus about what God expects from each of us. Every person on this planet, no matter who they are or where they are, have God-given talents and abilities which God expects them to use for His glory, and for the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Someday in heaven, rewards are going to be given out to those who understood this, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, took those talents and multiplied them back to God. My question to you today is this: what are you doing with your "talents"? How are you using your abilities and assets (money) in such a way that they

will reproduce and reap a mighty harvest for the Lord's glory? Too many Christians are like the person in today's story, who because of fear (Matthew 25:25), refused to risk anything for the Lord, and as a result, incurred the Lord's anger and wrath when judgment day came around.

In the story itself, the "talents" represented the money the people had from God. He expected them to use that money for Him, sowing, giving and investing it so that it would make more "talents" for the master, who represents God in this story. But talent could also include your natural abilities, or the abilities you've acquired through schooling, training and a lot of hard work. No matter what form your "talent" may take, whether it be money, or natural abilities, you're responsible for getting involved with what you have, and by faith, plant those things into something that is actively working to fulfill God's Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). Don't hide your talents in the ground like the person did in our story today. If you do, you're going to incur the Lord's anger one day when you stand before Him. As far as He's concerned, failure to step out in faith and trust God with the resources and assets we have is to say you want to "play it safe", and never risk anything for God's work or kingdom. That's the ultimate expression of selfishness, and that's why Jesus calls a person like that WICKED, LAZY and UNPROFITABLE (Matthew 25:26-30). Don't be wicked, lazy and unprofitable any longer! If you've been hesitant to offer your money or your abilities to God out of fear for any reason, then its time you made a change, and began walking by faith! God can't multiply and bless what you don't give. The whole kingdom of God operates like men planting seeds in the ground (Mark 4:26). If you want God to bless you, risk what you have in simple faith, and watch Him multiply it back to you for His glory. Then you can repeat the cycle all over again, and again, and again, continuing to grow and multiply and become more and more like Jesus expects you to be! Living as a player in the body of Christ. No longer just a selfish spectator, but an active participant!

01/12/08

Matthew 28:20

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE!

One of the last promises Jesus left us before He went back to Heaven was this one. He told all of us to go into all the world, making disciples of every nation, and in the process, never to forget that He was with us always, no matter where we went. Its important for you to remember that, always. We live in a world full of lonely people. You might feel like one of them today, and if you do, or if you ever have, let me cheer you up with this truth. Jesus is ALWAYS there with you, you are NEVER alone. You may feel like you're alone, or you may feel lonely, but that doesn't change the fact that He is at your side 24/7, wherever you are, no matter what you're going through. I don't know about you, but that greatly encourages me! When facing obstacles, hurdles and situations that tempt me to fear, its so comforting and reassuring to remember that the King of kings, Jesus Christ Himself, is right there with me, and you!

As you begin to tackle the problems, challenges and circumstances of 2008, rejoice that you're not in this fight alone! You have Jesus on your side, at your side, and by His Spirit, actually living within your spirit! Praise God! Sure, all of us have had moments when we've felt alone and isolated. I have, and you have too. I remember the loneliest moment of my life, the time I first landed in the Philippines in September, 1980. As I sat in that airplane seat as the plane taxied to a stop at the Manila airport, it suddenly hit me! I was on the other side of the world, and I didn't know anyone, had very little money, didn't have anyone to meet me, didn't know the language, and had no ticket back home! I had only enough money to buy a one-way airplane ticket, so basically I was stuck! In that moment, as I looked out the window at the two soldiers at the bottom of the staircase with machine guns, greeting the passengers as they disembarked the plane, I felt more alone than at any point before or after in my life. But praise God, in that moment, I heard the voice of the Lord clearly in my spirit. In no uncertain terms, He reassured me I was in the right place at the right time, so there was nothing to worry about. He would take care of me.

Oh, friend, those words were the most beautiful words I had ever heard in my life! Why? Because Jesus was with me, I wasn't alone! And from that day until now, He's always been with me, and will always be there for you. So don't feel alone my friend. You're not! The head of the church, the Son of God, the soon-coming King, Jesus, is with you now! Relax! He will take good care of you!

01/13/08

Luke 9:51 **THE FORCE OF DETERMINATION**

When it came time for Jesus to go to Jerusalem to offer Himself as our supreme sin sacrifice, the Bible says He steadfastly set his face to go. Isaiah says His face was like a flint, a picture of steely determination (Isaiah 50:7). My friend, when you discover the power and force of your determination, you'll come to realize that no force in hell can stand against you or stop you from your appointed goal in Christ. Once you set your face like Jesus did, with steely determination, you create a spiritual force within you that God honors, anoints, and empowers. One of the most effective tactics the enemy uses against us is **DISTRACTION**. The devil will always be trying to get us off course by distracting us from God's purpose and assignment. Determination protects you from the allure of satanic distraction. It's a power hell has no answer for. With the kind of determination Jesus showed in going to Jerusalem, you can move right on past every temptation the devil throws your way. My question to you today is this: **HOW DETERMINED ARE YOU TO WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF YOUR SALVATION?** Most believers live so far below God's promises, in part because they never develop the kind of determination to take them to better things in Christ. How about you? Where do you stand all of this?

I can just imagine the look on our Lord's face when He knew it was time to go up to Jerusalem. He knew what He would have to do up there, and in His flesh, He naturally recoiled from the idea. That's why He had those moments of temptation and struggle in the garden of Gethsemane. In the natural, He didn't want to undergo the horrendous torture and pain of the passion, anymore than you or I would. But because of that intense, powerful determination, He had the inner fortitude and strength to overcome and prevail. Nothing could deter His purpose or destiny, He was **DETERMINED!** The good news is that same determination is within you now, its called **FREE WILL!** You can decide. You can choose. You can change course. You can turn around. You can say "enough is enough"! What have you struggled with? Do you know that if you really decide to overcome in that area, you can! No matter how many times you've failed or fallen, with determination driving you, you can gain the victory. In most cases, it's the lack of real determination that dooms our efforts to secure victory in the first place. We want victory, but we're not really determined enough to charge through the enemy's defenses to a place of victory. Its time! Lower your head, squint your eyes, and in your heart of hearts, find your strength to overcome with a Divine determination that no devil in hell can withstand!

01/14/08

Proverbs 27:8 **DON'T GO WANDERING OFF!**

If you have small children as a parent, or have had them before, you no doubt have had times when you would tell them not to wander off - to stay insight and stay close! Maybe you would take them to a park or playground, and as they ran off to the swing set, you would tell them not to wander away. Why? Because as a parent, you knew that if they wandered too faraway from you, something bad could happen. Well, in our verse today, we find God telling all of us, His children, the very same thing. Don't go wandering off - away from His Word, from His Spirit and away from His perfect will for our lives. Wandering is a progressive thing, isn't it? Its gradual, and in most cases, its not an intentional thing. You don't purposely intend to end up isolated and far from protection and security, but you end up there anyway. Spiritually, many Christians are doing exactly that today - and don't realize the danger they are

putting themselves in. How about you? Are you sticking close by the side of Jesus, or are you wandering somewhere outside the confines of His love, perfect will and word?

The proverb we're looking at today uses a wandering bird to illustrate the dangers in spiritual wandering. What happens to the bird that wanders too far from the nest? He never comes home! He doesn't realize or understand that there are many predators out there who are just waiting to pounce on him. And the farther the bird wanders away, the easier it is for catastrophe to occur. The same thing holds true spiritually. Spending time doing the 7 Priorities of Life each day will prevent you from wandering away from God and His protection. What are the 7 Priorities of Life? 1) Worship. 2) Praise. 3) Prayer. 4) Confession. 5) Meditation. 6) Study and reading. 7) Sharing, or witnessing. In 2 Peter 1:10, we are told what happens to those who are not diligent to stay close to God. They end up falling away. They end up stumbling, and in many cases, never get themselves back on track with God. Don't let that be you! Stay close to God, and don't start wandering away spiritually! Wandering is like drifting. It's as low, almost unperceivable process. Have you stopped praying daily? Have you stopped reading and studying your Bible daily? Have you stopped spending time with God daily? If so, you're wandering! Get back on track today, and don't wander anymore!

01/15/08

Proverbs 27:20

YOUR EYES CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED!

One of the first and most effective ways to walk in victory over your enemies is to understand them and anticipate their attacks. In James 4:1-7, the Bible will list for us the 3 enemies we have to deal with while on earth in Christ. 1) The devil and his demons. 2) The world system the devil is in control of. 3) Our dead-to-sin flesh. And in today's verse, we see a characteristic of the flesh we would be well to understand and anticipate. The eyes, which are a major gateway to avenues of the flesh, are never satisfied. What does that mean? It means exactly that - the flesh is NEVER satisfied with what you give it today - it will want more tomorrow. It can't be satisfied! And the eyes are one of the primary ways the flesh manifests itself. Your eyes, if left unrenewed and undisciplined, will always wander away from God and His Word. This is something you must understand and anticipate. If you don't, your eyes will take you places that you don't want to go - and you'll end up in areas of sin and lust you never intended to go.

This explains why people, who seemingly have so much, always lust after more. Why? Because the eyes can't be satisfied. Give your flesh one Krispy Kreme doughnut today, it will want a dozen of them tomorrow! You might be married to the most beautiful woman in the world, or the most handsome man, but your eyes will still want to go cruising! Why? Because that is the nature of the enemy called our flesh. Its never satisfied, and because the eyes are a major part of the flesh, the eyes are never satisfied either. Many Christians are victims of this kind of deception, and don't know that they are. I'm all for prosperity, because it takes money and resources to fulfill the Great Commission. However, many Christians disguise greed by calling it prosperity, and don't realize what is actually happening in their lives. Certainly, its alright to live in a nice house, and drive a nice car, but at some point you should be able to say ""that's enough"". I mean, how big does the house really need to be - unless you're planning on holding Bible Studies there each week! How expensive of a car do you really need to own? At what point do you draw the line and say: ""You know, I have a very comfortable life - I think I'll just stop here with the acquisition of things for myself, and concentrate my resources on the funding the Great Commission"". And that is and act of the will my friend, because your eyes will NEVER voluntarily come to such a decision! Your eyes will always be wanting more than what it has now, so beware and keep your perspective! For your sake, and the sake of the kingdom of God.

01/16/08

Judges 3:2

UNDERSTAND THERE'S A WAR GOING ON!

"As we continue talking about the right ways to enter into the new year, 2008, I want you to understand that we're involved in the most deadly warfare possible. This war isn't for land, territories or earthly riches. This war is for the eternal souls of men. And as Christians, we should be constantly living in the light of this fact, and planning and prioritizing accordingly. As I write today's devotional, I am in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. As I look out from my hotel window, I see so many people living in abject poverty and need. As I flew into the city earlier today, I was looking out the airplane window, observing all the shacks and slums where so many poor people live. And each time I do see people in a group setting like that, I'm always thinking about their souls - and whether or not they're ready to meet Jesus. It's been this way with me for almost 30 years now - ever since I got saved back in 1978. I don't ever want to forget the fact we're in a war - and that we face an enemy who is extremely determined and committed against us. In our verse today, we see the phrase that reads: **THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MIGHT BE TAUGHT TO KNOW WAR..** Have you been taught to know war? Most believers have not.

Too many Christians just plod along in life, seemingly oblivious to what is actually happening all around them in the spirit realm. To talk with some believers, you'd never in a million years get any sense of awareness concerning the fact we're in a war for the souls of men. You'd never know in observing the way they live their lives - they act as if nothing serious is going on. And try to get them involved to help win souls, and they're too busy! They don't have the time, or don't have the money, or whatever! Excuses! My friend, I want you to enter into 2008 with a fresh awareness of the fact that you are a military target, and the devil is planning his attacks against you even as you read this today. He wants to kill you, and if possible, drag your soul to hell forever. He's not fooling around, so you shouldn't be either! Do you have a "wartime" mentality? Are you prioritizing your time, talents and assets accordingly? You know, back in the time of WW II, our country was in a wartime mentality. Our whole way of life was different. Although I wasn't born yet at the time, I've heard the stories from those who experienced it. Gas was rationed. Food was too. Women took the place of the men in the factories, to support the war effort. There were war bonds for sale, to help finance the war effort. All kinds of things changed when this country went to war back then. Well, that's the kind of mentality we should be protecting today, and everyday until Jesus comes! This is war my friend. Live your life in light of that fact.

01/17/08

Joshua 17:1

ARE YOU A MAN OF WAR?

In yesterday's devotional, we talked about the importance of always knowing we're in a war, so that we can maintain a "war mentality" at all times. Today, the Bible describes Machir, the father of Gilead, as a **MAN OF WAR**. When the tribes were dividing up the promised land, this man Machir got a nice piece of property - Gilead and Bashan - **BECAUSE** he was a man of war. This is the way it should be, and this is the way it's going to be as far as God is concerned. Those who understand the fact that we're in a war, and live their lives for God accordingly, will get the choice rewards someday in heaven. Could we truly call you a man or woman of war today? Are you living a soldier's life, standing guard at your post, alert and ready for anything the enemy tries against you?

This is the way God wants us to live our lives on earth. As front-line fighters in the army of the Lord. Men and women of war - alert, focused, powerful and highly trained in the skills of spiritual combat. Machir, the subject of today's devotional, got blessed and rewarded handsomely by God **BECAUSE** he was a man of war. My friend, there is coming a day when we'll stand before the Commander-in-Chief, to be judged over our performance here on earth in this life. How will you fare

when your time to stand before Jesus comes? Will He be able to salute you and call you a true man or woman of war? And, are you living your life today with that kind of ""war mentality""? Take stock of your life today, and if you need to change your mentality, then change it. The more war-like you become, the better it will go for you someday in heaven, when you stand before the Lord! He is a Lord of war, whether you realize it or not, so the sooner you climb on board with an attitude that compliments that fact - the better it will go for you -here in this life, and in the life to come.

01/18/08

Proverbs 27:23

KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!

God expects you and I to watch over our areas of influence and responsibility. No excuses! No reasons for failure! Whatever - or whoever- you're responsible for in the eyes of God, - you need to know what's going on! If you're a parent, know what's going on with your kids. If you're a husband or wife - know what's going on with your significant other half. If you're in charge of a ministry in some way in someplace, know what's going on with your subordinates. All of this is scriptural, and God expects it of you!

Over the years, I can't tell you how many times in counseling I've heard this excuse to try and justify failure: I didn't know what was going on. My friend, that's not an excuse - it's a cover for incompetence and spiritual failure. Call it what you want - but when bad things happen under your watch - its your fault ultimately! Now I'm sure many people will throw up their hands in protest to this, but the fact remains. If God places you in charge of ANYTHING - He expect you to be the one in charge! No matter what - your marriage, your kids, your job - whatever! Know what's going on! Keep tabs. Ask questions. Pray about issues that seem wrong or out of order. Exercise due diligence to be the one in charge. Failure to do so will only indict you before Almighty God when you stand before the Lord on judgment day. So beware! Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to your herds!

01/19/08

Proverbs 27:17

ITS NOT ALL ABOUT YOU!

Today's verse reminds us that in this life is not all about us. Rather, our responsibilities always lie with servant hood. First, we are to love and serve God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Second, we're to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And when loving our neighbor as ourselves, we have a responsibility to be strong enough to inspire them and help them walk in a place of consistent spiritual victory. That's what the Bible is referring to when it tells us to ""sharpen"" the countenance of our friends. We're to understand that our life is not all about people servicing our needs, desires and wants. Rather, its all about being a source of light, strength, encouragement and assistance to those around us whom we would call friends. Are you sharpening anyone's countenance at this point of time in your life? Are you a source of spiritual strength to those in need of it? That's how you're to be a real friend to people.

God expects us to sharpen the countenance of our friends. He expects us to help others raise the bar of performance and spiritual excellence in their lives. He wants all of us to see the bigger picture, and understand that our lives are not just selfish exercises in acquisition, but instead, a constant expression of outreach and impartation to others in the Name of Jesus. Is that how you're living your life today? If not, its time to change, and while we're still in the first month of the new year, 2008,there's no better time than now! When your friends look at you, or when they're around you, what do they see? How to portray yourself to them? Do they see a mighty spiritual warrior, who is solely focused on the eternal things of God? Or do they see something less than that? If its something less than that, you can change! I'd like to think that the friends I have in this life can always look to me for inspiration when they need it. They can always hear words of faith and hope, instead of words of doubt, fear and unbelief. When the chips are

down and the going has gotten rough, I'd like to think my friends know they can always turn to me for strength and encouragement needed to get the victory and keep it. And if that's the case, then I think the Lord is pleased with how I'm inter-acting with those who call me their friend. How about you?

01/20/08

Mark 9:35

CLIMBING DOWN THE LADDER OF SUCCESS

The road to greatness in the kingdom of God is not a road many Christians stake in their lives. Jesus said that if you wanted to be great in God's kingdom, you'd have to become a servant to all. In other words, you'd have to adopt a completely different mindset than that of the world around you. Instead of starting out at the bottom and climbing up the ladder of success, Christians start at the top of the ladder, and climb down to ladder of success. By doing that, they become GREAT in the kingdom of God. The farther down they climb, the greater they become in God's eyes. Why? Because we're supposed to be servants, not masters. We're supposed to understand that our whole life is about serving others. First, we serve God, and second, we serve those that God loves - which would be everybody else besides us! To do this, one must exercise the discipline to think, talk and act like a servant! It doesn't come easy friend - your flesh is a very selfish entity that is always wanting to be the master rather than the servant. To be a servant, you have to practice!

Most believers are not thinking like a servant. They're always concerned about other people serving them, instead of the other way around. This is not the way to greatness as far as God is concerned. When Jesus came, He set the ultimate example for all of us to follow. He frankly told the disciples that He did not come to earth to be served, but to be the servant (Mark 10:45). And one of the best demonstrations of this, as far as everyday life is concerned, would be the washing of the disciple's feet during the event we commonly call the Last Supper. If you read about that event, you can readily see that the object lesson was one of true servant hood. If God Almighty, the 2nd person of the Trinity, could come to earth, lay aside the powers and prestige of Divinity by becoming a man, and do things like wash the feet of those He has created - certainly we can do it to one another! Have you been washing anyone's feet lately - figuratively speaking? The more you do it, the greater you become in the eyes of God, and the farther down the road to success you're going to be. Praise God! Its exactly the opposite to how the world thinks, but that's ok. That's a good thing. As long as you're able to separate yourself from the selfish mindset of the world, or of those in the body of Christ who don't know any better, you're going to be alright! When you got saved, you were automatically put on the top of the ladder of life. There's no higher place to be than to be in Christ. And from there, the climbing isn't up, its down. Remember that, and you'll achieve a measure of success and satisfaction very few Christians ever really achieve.

01/21/08

Mark 9:41

CUPS AND REWARDS

In the last few daily devotionals, we've been talking about the idea of greatness through servant hood. This passage today further amplifies that truth. When someone is busy about the Father's business, and someone else offers a cup of cold water, Jesus says they will by no means lose their reward. Therefore, the rewards that God offers us are directly tied to the cups of cold water we offer others. What is a cup of cold water? Well, in the context of the times in which Jesus lived when He gave this illustration, it could certainly be just that - a literal cup of cold water for someone who is hot and parched and in need of some refreshment. For us today, it could mean many things. It could mean an encouraging word to someone who is battling the temptation to quit or give up on the things of God. It could mean a sack of groceries taken to your neighbors house is you know they're having some hard times financially. It could mean buying somebody a new pair of shoes if you notice the ones they have are old and falling

apart. It could mean many things, but overall, it means being AVAILABLE with what you have to bless fellow soldiers out in the trenches doing their best to serve God and fulfill the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20).

That's what the message of prosperity is all about, did you know that? Prosperity is not about you acquiring more things for yourself. That's what many people think is the "Prosperity message", but that's not what the Bible says about it. Prosperity is all about having CUPS OF COLD WATER – having them to give to those in need of something to keep them going in ministry. The more cups of cold water you give out, figuratively speaking, the more of a reward you're going to have in heaven some day. Too many Christians are unable to offer any water to weary Christian workers because they don't have any cups! They're cup-less! You can't offer the cold water without a cup my friend! You need the water, and you need the cup in order to be a blessing to those in need of refreshment. I don't know about you, but I want to have many cups and lots of cold water to offer my fellow Christian soldiers. I want to be a source of refreshment when others need it, and to do that, I must have the cups and cold water to give! You know, as a hobby, I like to get on my bicycle and ride. I'm an avid cyclist, and participate in races and fun events whenever I can. During a race, you'll have people standing alongside the road, with cups of water in their hands. The cyclists ride by and grab the cup for a cold drink on the fly. How long would the cyclist be able to go with those same people just stood alongside the road and clapped and cheered only? The cyclist would probably never make it to the finish line because nobody gave him his cold cups of water along the race route. In the race we call ministry, I want to always have a cold cup of water to give as my fellow soldiers ride on by! How about you? If you're interested in great rewards some day in heaven, here's how you're going to qualify!

01/22/08

Mark 9:43

CUT OFF WHAT NEEDS TO BE CUT OFF!

In our verse today, Jesus tells us to deal with any area of weakness or chronic failure with passion and intensity. When He tells us to CUT OFF our offending hands, He's not telling us to literally cut them off. Rather, He's telling us to get radical about removing the strongholds that have secured a place in our minds or bodies, and do whatever is necessary to rid ourselves from those things once and for all. In your life, what are those areas that have chronically been areas of failure for you? Whatever they are, you need to cut them off so you can move on with God. The work of God is always moving forward, and we need to be able to move with God - not be left behind because we're carrying all these weights and sins with us.

The terminology that Jesus uses here should tell us how important it is to do what He's telling us to do. The consequences are dire to say the least. According to our Lord, it's better to enter into life crippled or maimed, than to go to hell for all eternity with all limbs intact. Think about that for a moment! All of us need to stop and meditate on the consequences of what we allow in our lives in terms of sin and compromise. And to whatever degree you have allowed those things to gain a foothold within you, you must now reverse that trend and with all your heart, attack those areas to bring them down and crush them under your feet forever. Yes, that sounds radical, and it is. Your soul is eternal, and God's standards are unchangingly pure and high. In my teaching called THE CONGREGATION OF THE MIGHTY, we talk about the 7 areas of management to become a member, and maintain membership in God's elite congregation. The second area of management is this right here: MANAGING YOUR WEAKNESSES. Yours might be different than mine, but everybody has inherent areas of strength and weakness. You have to honestly determine what those areas of weaknesses are, then determine to do whatever it takes to rid yourself of those areas of failure and sin once and for all. This is, in essence, what Jesus was talking about when He told us to cut off offensive hands or feet. Cut off those areas where the devil has gained

access. Do it now! Do it today! Repent for the failures before God, and get on with your life!"

01/23/08

Joshua 14:6 **DON'T FORGET GOD'S WORD!**

When it came time to divvy up the promised land, Caleb came to Joshua and reminded him of what God had told the both of them 45 years earlier! Imagine that! Without the benefit of all we have today in terms of word processing, this man took the Word of God, and held it in his heart and mind for 45 years. He quoted God's promises to Joshua as if it had been given the day before! This is a fabulous lesson for all of us to take note of. When the crises of life come your way, and when everything looks like your going down to defeat - its **KNOWING WHAT GOD HAS SAID** that will begin the process of bringing you through to victory. Caleb said to Joshua: **YOU KNOWWHAT THE LORD SAID ABOUT US BACK THEN..** In other words, Caleb was basing his present day faith on something God had told him 45 years earlier. Are you doing the same thing with God's Word?

Our responsibility is find out what God has said, and **HOLD ON TO IT!** Never let it go! Meditate on it, and get it down into your heart where the devil can't get at it. This is what Caleb did. Imagine his situation for a moment. He was sent back out into the desert to wander for 40 years – not because of his unbelief, but because of the unbelief of all the other Jews. And out in that desert, day by day, wandering as they did, he watched every unbeliever die off one by one - but never did he allow what he saw daily to sway him from the promise he had in his heart from God. What an example to follow! They wandered for 40 years, not 40 minutes, days, weeks or even months. Years! And even after the 40 years of wandering, and then the 5more years it took to get to this point of time where he's standing before Joshua, he quoted word for word what God had told them through Moses. Friend, no matter what - never ever forget what God has said! That Word from heaven is your ticket to victory! God's Word has within it the power to deliver you from **ANY SITUATION** you'll ever find yourself in. When the devil came against Jesus with his temptations, Jesus quoted the Word of God to defeat him. Before you can quote it you have to know it! That's why the Bible says to study to show yourself approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). Study! Know what God has said. What men says about your situation doesn't matter. Its only what God has said that counts! His Word is power, and His Word is eternal. Remember that, and don't forget God's Word **TO YOU!**

01/24/08

Joshua 14:7 **SPEAK FORTH FROM YOUR HEART!**

When Caleb and Joshua were facing thousands of people who were doubting God's promises in one accord, they spoke from their heart. They knew that true faith comes from the heart, not from the head. As you recall, those two men were two of twelve spies sent to do recon work on the Promised Land. They were gone 40 days, and when they came back, the 10 gave an evil report of doubt and unbelief, and only Caleb and Joshua gave a good report of faith. Well, if you know the story, the Jews believed the majority report (as is usually the case with people) of doubt and unbelief. The result? They cried all night, and had a big pity-party for themselves! But no matter, because when you speak from your heart it doesn't matter if you're the last man on earth standing in faith. You'll hold your ground because you're not talking out of your head, but out of your heart. True faith is always from the heart, never from the head! If you're going to develop in faith, learn to listen to your heart, not your head.

When Caleb was talking to Joshua, he said the evil report of doubt and unbelief had made the people's heart melt with fear. But in that very moment, Caleb's faith grew stronger because he was speaking and believing out of his heart, not his head. This is the way of faith. Your head may be screaming one thing, but your heart is your sure guide. The devil can try to disguise his voice so that you

think that it is God talking to you, but he can't do a thing about what you have down in your heart! Bring a word to God as it is in your heart, just like Caleb did. Speak out of your heart, not your head! Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak (Matthew 12:34). So, fill your heart with God's Word, through study, prayer and meditation. Take the time to fill your spirit with the Word of God, and when crunch time comes, you'll be speaking out of your heart. Everyone else's heart may be melting with fear, but not yours! You'll be just like Joshua and Caleb. Speaking God's Word with boldness, in the face of death, discouragement and defeat. That's the life of faith. So move beyond the head, and start living out of the heart!

01/25/08

Matthew 24:2 **GET YOUR EYES OFF THE TEMPORARY THINGS!**

When I read a verse like this, it always reminds me to keep my eyes squarely fixed on the eternal things of God, rather than upon the temporary things of this life. This is important because people have a natural tendency to focus attention on this life simply because this is where we are, and this is where we live. Sometimes its hard to remember that there is another world that is actually the parent for this world, and that everything in that world is as unchanging as everything in this world is subject to change! The disciples were so impressed with how beautiful their temple looked, but Jesus wasn't. He knew what we need to remind ourselves about. Everything in this life that's new today will be old tomorrow. Whenever I look at old, crushed cars being hauled off to some re-cycling plant on the back of a truck, this is what I think of. At one time, those old wrecks were brand new cars that people drooled over. But not look at them. Just a pile of rusty old junk. Once they were new, and now they're old.

That's the way of the world my friend, so don't get caught up with the sin of coveting things of this world or this life. Everything is subject to decay here on earth. Everything gets old, and will one day need to be replaced. Only the things of God are unchanging, and can be renewed day by day! 2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us that our outward man will perish (grow old and one day die), but our inward man can (and should) be renewed daily. Your spirit man will never grow old or die, and the rewards you receive from God for being a loyal, trustworthy servant will be yours forever. They'll never get old and rusty either. So keep these things in your mind daily, and never let the false allure of the world deceive you into the sins of coveting and lusting after the things of this world. Stay sharp. Stay focused on spiritual things!

01/26/08

Joshua 6:2 **SEE!**

When God was talking to Joshua about the conquest of Jericho, He said something to him that blesses me everytime I read it. God said, "See, I have given you city, the king and all the city's inhabitants". When God told Joshua to SEE something, He was telling him to walk by faith, and not by natural sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). In the natural, all Joshua could see were these huge walls staring at him, with enemy soldiers looking down at him from the top. But God told him to see by the spirit, to walk by faith and believe that the city **WAS ALREADY CONQUERED**. Notice, that when God told Joshua about the city, He used the past tense to describe what the situation was. He told Joshua that He **HAD GIVEN** the city to him and the Jews he was leading. As far as God was concerned, it was already a done deal. That's the way He operates, because Romans 4:17 tells us that God always calls those things which be not as though they were. And because we're made in his image and likeness, He expects us to learn to do the very same thing.

Whenever you're staring at your "Jericho", figuratively speaking, follow the directions that God gave Joshua. See your victory by the eye of your faith, and realize that the victory is **ALREADY WON** as

far as God is concerned. Just like He told Joshua that He had ALREADY given him the city, so too, whatever it is that you're in need of today from the hand of God, remember that as far as He is concerned, He has ALREADY given you whatever it is you're standing in faith for. Of course, the unrenewed mind will have trouble with this because it always wants to see something before accepting the fact that the victory has been won. With God, and the things of God, its always exactly the opposite from that kind of mindset. God wants you to see by the eye of faith BEFORE you see anything with your natural eyes to indicate you have what you're standing in faith for. Basically, because God is no respecter of persons, He'll be telling you the same thing He told Joshua as he stood before the walls of Jericho. He'll say to you, "SEE!" I HAVE GIVEN YOU YOUR VICTORY, YOUR ANSWER, YOUR HEALING, YOUR PROVISION". Oh, praise God, I get excited when I teach on these things. You should too, because God is always good for His Word my friend. Always! You just need to understand the ways of faith!

01/27/08

Luke 24:49 GET THE POWER!

Before Jesus went back to Heaven, He gave specific instructions to His disciples about the responsibility to evangelize in His Name. He told them not to leave Jerusalem until they had been filled with power from Heaven. He called this His "promise from Heaven". What would that promise be? The sending of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. This is what every Christian needs before they can effectively witness and share Jesus to the unsaved around them. Yes, you can witness, preach and conduct ministry with being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, but why would you want to? If God is offering this wonderful gift to you which will help you witness with more power, why wouldn't you want to have it? I also believe that when you receive this promise of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, you receive a heavenly language which the Bible calls tongues. Its part of the gift that comes with the power of God. If you haven't ever been filled with Holy Spirit, receiving the power from on High with the evidence of speaking with other tongues, let me encourage you today to receive it as soon as you can!

This world has plenty of obstacles, hurdles, demonic attacks and other things that seek to hinder us from successfully preaching and fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). We need all the help God offers us, and if He felt this was an important component to have before we launched out into the world for Jesus, why should we resist it? Over the years, I've talked to many Christians who, for what ever reason, won't step out in faith and ask God for this power from on High. They might be afraid of it, or they might have been taught it wasn't from God in the first place. They might have been around some people who mis-represented the truth about this wonderful gift, and so they're not apprehensive about asking to receive it. But my friend, nothing that God offers is ever bad for us, it only helps us grow and be better at representing Jesus to the world. Jesus told His men not to leave until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. He felt that strongly about it, so I think we should understand how important it really is. And because it is so important, we should not be surprised when we see the devil fighting so hard to discourage us from asking and receiving this marvelous gift. So, if you have a desire to be used of God in significant and powerful ways, more than what you've ever experienced before, then don't wait another day. This promise of the Holy Spirit's infilling is for anyone, whosoever! So, don't wait! Get that power now!

01/28/08

Psalms 37:16 A POVERTY THAT'S BETTER THAN ALL RICHES!

No matter how much or how little you have in this life, if you're Christian, you have more than all the rich men on earth combined who don't know Jesus. True riches start with Jesus. Without Him in your heart as Lord and Savior you have nothing - you're poor and spiritually bankrupt. This is what believers

need to remind themselves about. If you don't, its easy to get jealous, envious and desirous to have what all the sinners enjoy in this life. But remember, this life is only a vapor, according to James 4:14. Just a puff of smoke that's here for a moment, and then its gone forever. You could be the richest person on the planet, but without Jesus you're still poor and bankrupt as far as God is concerned. One day everything of this life will be left behind. One man said it this way: I've never seen a hearse pulling a U-haul trailer! So before you drown yourself in self-pity for what you don't have in this life, stop and remind yourself about what the true riches really are."

When I see all these rich movie stars, and celebrities strutting around like they do, I always shake my head and chuckle to myself. I'm so thankful and grateful to God for making me a truly rich man. I have Jesus. He is my Lord. He is my Savior. He is my soon-coming King. Even if I live under the bridge eating dog food for the rest of my days, and live out of a shopping cart - I'm still richer than the likes of Bill Gates! Eternity Is a long time compared to a short span of time down here on earth. Jesus said it best in Luke, when he talked about the man who was so rich he just kept building barns for himself (Luke 12:16-21). In that story, Jesus talked about people who were not "rich towards God". If you're a rich man who doesn't know Jesus, all your riches are basically a Satanic reservoir that the devil utilizes to keep money away from Christians who want to finance and fulfill the Great Commission. The devil doesn't care how many homes you have, cars you drive or racks of clothes you have in your closet. Just so you don't give any of your wealth to the work of God - that's all he's interested in. People who have riches without Jesus are deceived and being used by the devil. Now you can understand when unbelievers think and act this way, but when well-to-do Christians exhibit the sin of greed and selfishness - well - that's just a hard one for me to handle! What a fool that is - to know Jesus and still keep hoarding wealth and possessions unto themselves! I pray you're not one of those today. If you're rich financially, how much of your wealth is being channeled into the gospel - rather than towards the purchasing of more things for yourself? Think about it my friend. If you have Jesus, you're rich. If you have Jesus and you're financially wealthy, you have a debt to pay to the world. And if you're poor financially, don't worry about it. With Jesus you have everything. Without Him you have nothing - in this life or in the one to come.

01/29/08

Romans 14:1 NEVER MIND THE DOUBTFUL THINGS!

When Paul wrote to the Roman church, he instructed them to avoid getting into disputes about "doubtful things". What are doubtful things? They are those issues that Christians fuss and fight about amongst themselves, but which the Bible is basically silent on. What kinds of issues, or things? Things like going to movies, dancing, drinking wine or other alcoholic beverages, TV, lifestyle, dress codes and things like that. If you've been saved for anywhere longer than 1 hour, you've no doubt been exposed to some of these "doubtful things" in your church circles. The point Paul was trying to make here is that as far as God is concerned, these are things which aren't that important, so He doesn't want us spending all of our time fighting over our disagreements in these areas. For us as Christians, our job is preach the Gospel to the lost (Mark 15:16-20), and disciple new believers into a closer walk with the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20). And none of these ""doubtful things"" are listed in our Lord's command to preach the Gospel in all the world! That right there should tell us that if its not that important to God, it shouldn't be that important to us.

In our ministry in the Philippines, I'm constantly working to educate, and in some cases, re-educate my pastors about this issue. Like Paul, my desire is see us all major on the things that are really important, and not to spend time and energy fussing over smaller issues of choice that don't really have anything to do with the Gospel message. In today's verse, Paul was instructing his spiritual children to receive newcomers into the church, but NOT for the purpose of trying to impose upon them codes of

lifestyle and conduct that only lead to disputes, quarrels and strife. In the next few days, we will take a longer look at these things, because in these last days, we need to stay focused on what really matters to God, and that's bringing people into the saving knowledge of Jesus. In His mind, that's what is really important, not whether we are or are not going to movies, watching TV, or enjoying other forms of "worldly" entertainment. So matter what your heritage or background may be - relax and let God talk to you about your own personal lifestyle. The body of Christ is made up of people that have come out of many diverse and different religious backgrounds. Let's not let those differences hinder us from walking in love towards the unbelievers, and especially, towards God and one another!

01/30/08

Romans 14:6

BEING FULLY PERSUADED IN YOUR OWN MIND!

When Paul gave his instructions to the Romans church (and for all of us since it was inspired by the Holy Spirit) about avoiding the issue of doubtful things (Romans 14:1), he told them that everyone was to be FULLYPERSUADED IN THEIR OWN MINDS. This is the key to understanding and managing all of these issues. When it comes to issues that the Bible doesn't specifically list as sins, we are to follow our own conscience, and make our decisions before God accordingly. Here's an example. If you personally don't like wearing jewelry (or lots of it), that's fine. That's your choice, and God will honor it. But you can't get up and legislate that from the pulpit as if your personal choice is God's chosen way for all of us. Each person needs to be fully persuaded in their own mind. Some folks like to wear lots of jewelry, some don't. God tells all of us to be following our own heart in these matters, and that whatever we decide is ok with Him. Why? Because as far as He's concerned, these things aren't that important. Some people don't think its right for men to wear earrings, but that's just a matter of personal opinion and choice. Its no sin to wear an earring if you're a man, God really doesn't care one way or the other. Wearing one doesn't make the man any closer to God, and not wearing one doesn't keep him farther away from God. I have an earring, and it doesn't hinder me from following God, and He has never told me it bothers Him, so what's the big deal? Arguing about such stuff is only a waste of time and energy, and its time for believers to stop all of that.

You see, many things we fight about, and refer to as "sins", aren't sins at all. They're just personal choices that God leaves up to us to decide personally. Remember friend, God sees the whole body of Christ, not just the part you're familiar with. Some people in certain countries think it's a sin to drink wine, but in other countries they don't. European Christians drink wine like American Christians drink water. So, does that mean all European Christians sin when they drink wine? Of course not! And by the way, Jesus not only drank wine (the alcoholic version please), He made wine from water at the Cana wedding. So if drinking wine is a sin, Jesus was a sinner! Well, of course we know He never sinned in anyway, so what does that tell us about this issue of wine? The bottom line, it's a matter of culture, geography and personal choice. The Bible says drunkenness is a sin, but, as an example, millions of Christians have a glass of wine with their meals in Europe, and they don't get drunk, so its not a sin to them in the eyes of God. As far as God is concerned, the issue is one of self-control and balance. That's all. Over-indulgence in ANYTHING is sin, but that doesn't make certain lifestyle choices a sin just because excess leads to sin. There's a ton of Christians out there addicted to coffee - they can't get by without their morning cup or two (or more) of Joe! Certain Christians in other parts of the world might say such people are living in sin, but are they? Oh yeah, Christians in some other countries think it's a sin to drink coffee, did you know that? They have no problem with wine, but their issue is with coffee! They think it's a drug because of the caffeine in it. So, does that make all of the Christians who drink coffee a sinner because they drink it? Of course not! LET EVERYPERSON BE FULLY PERSUADED IN THEIR OWN MINDS! Its time to major on the majors, and minor on the minors! The gospel is not

about food and drink (Romans 14:17), but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

01/31/08

Romans 14:23 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOUBTFUL THINGS AND SIN

We're talking about the issue of DOUBTFUL THINGS, listed in Romans 14:1. God, through Paul, tells us not to get into disputes over things that the Bible doesn't specifically call sin, but which some Christians erroneously call sin. Issues like dress code, food, the drinking of alcoholic beverages, jewelry, going to movies, watching TV, dancing and other things that many believers claim to be ""sins of the world"". I wonder what the self-appointed critics would say if they traveled with Jesus back when He was here! Jesus went to parties, and was always the life of the party -without getting drunk! In fact, His lifestyle was so radical and extreme, the Pharisees referred to Him as a wine-bibber (Matthew 11:19,20/Luke 7:34). Do you know what that term means? It means someone who is always drinking wine! I know in our own experiences, we've been criticized and gossiped about over these types of issues. Some women have stared at my wife as if she were the devil himself when we've gone to their churches to speak. Why? Because she wears make-up, has a short hair style, and frequently wears pant-suits. Oh my God! Stop the world and let me get off! We've been in services where some well-intentioned by totally mis-informed believer gets up and, supposedly under the anointing of the Lord, belts out a condemning "prophecy" about all women present wearing slacks are going to go to hell! Oh yeah, I'm not kidding. There are tons of Christians out there who think their only mission in life is to make everybody else live like they do. How sad! Do you think that's what Jesus died and rose from the dead for? So that we go into all the world and condemn people for the way they happen to live? That's not the gospel my friend!

Our job is to preach the gospel, not tell everybody else how we think they should live their lives. Of course we should stay away from sin at all times, and we should teach that to those we minister to. However, the Bible is quite clear about what God calls sin, and the doubtful things are not included! Passages like Galatians 5:19-21 are clear about what God calls sin. Proverbs 6:16-19 is another example showing us what God considers sin. Then there is also the sin of UNBELIEF (Hebrews 3,4). Many Christians who want to tell you how to live your life are many times guilty of this particular sin - the sin of unbelief. Romans 14:23 says whatever is not of faith is sin. So, yes, preach against sin, but the doubtful things are not sins! They are simply areas where God leaves it up to us to decide what is acceptable or not FOR US PERSONALLY. Read Romans 14 carefully - the whole chapter. I want to fulfill the Great Commission, not get bogged down in denominational wars over issues that are supposed to be decided in the privacy of one's own conscience. So let's concentrate our efforts on what really matters, and leave the doubtful things to each person individually. Amen! That's the true message of liberty in the New Testament, and that's the message we're charged to share with the world!"