

## Christian Life

Through Jesus Christ the love of God is placed within us by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). We have been delivered from the law that we might be free to walk in love towards God and toward others. This is the nature of the New Covenant. Instead of living by reference to a religion, a tradition, or a legal code, Christ lives His life in and through us as a free gift. As we walk in His faith, we experience the fruit of His love.

In this chapter we see what this love looks like, what it means in our daily lives and what its values are as the scripture portrays it. After a look at love itself, we will see how loves works in the following areas of our daily Christian lives:

- Family.
- Godliness.
- Good works.
- Christian giving.
- Involvement.

### Love

Jesus gave us one commandment. It is not kept through fear as we try to meet a standard of holiness. It is kept in response to Him freely accepting us. It is kept through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the gift of faith. Jesus commanded us to love because through Pentecost He has freely enabled us and because He gave His life as an example.

*Love shows by example.* The Father showed us His love by giving us His Son. But love can only work because He gets inside of us and changes our nature. We do not love Him because we are good, but because He gave us new life through the gospel.

We love Him, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19).

If you love Me, keep My commandment. This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. (John 13:34).

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear to us. For you remember brethren, our labour and travail...(1 Thes 2:7-8).

Everything Paul taught stemmed from this love which worked in him (2 Cor 5:14). He said that the purpose of our instruction is love, a pure conscience and un-pretended faith (1 Tim 1:5). Jesus' love purifies our heart and causes us to act in a godly manner that builds others up. In doing this, not one jot of the law passes away, but all is fulfilled in the New Covenant.

What does God's love look like? Firstly, He *loves the unworthy*. "Christ died for the ungodly."(Rom 5:6). We do not love someone for what we can get from them. We love, not because *our* love changes people, but because God's power can change anyone. The love of God is unconditional. This is what changed us.

Israel turned from God after receiving such kindness in election. Yet God did not give her up. They had become worse than a prostitute. In this filthiness and failure God said, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her...and it shall be in that day that you shall call me *Ishi* (husband)." (Hos 3:14, 16). This is speaking about the New Covenant. This is the kind of unconditional love that the New Covenant puts within us.

Hosea said Israel shall abide many days without a king and priest. This was written in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC, long before the exile to Babylon. Hosea said, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hos 3:5).

Jeremiah repeated Hosea's prophecy (Jer 50:1-6, 20), stating that Israel would *seek David* when Babylon fell. That is, scripture says that Hosea was referring to the return from Babylon, which led to the coming of Jesus and God's love restoring His remnant in the New Covenant. See also Jer 29:10-14, 30:9, 24, where *seeking David*, return from *all the nations* and the *latter days*, all refer to Judah's return from captivity after the fall of Babylon.

*Love is active.* Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay his life down for his friend." (John 15:13). James also said, "If we say, God bless you and do not help with the things that are needed, it is useless." (James 2:15-16). John said, "Let us love not in word, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18).

By this we perceive the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren. But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? (1 John 3:16-17).

*Love is not high minded of itself.* Though there are differing roles, our position is not our identity. Our identity is that we are freely accepted by the blood of Christ alone. We do not flaunt our position, but use it to serve, just as Jesus washed the disciples' feet (John 13:14).

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...(1 Cor 13:1-8).

This is the end of the commandment, the great ambition: not to do great things for God, but to love one another, as He has loved us. *Love never fails.* The right hand (*charisma*) can do much good for people in God, but the left hand (*character*), if not grounded in love, can wipe it all out and bring it all down.

He that loves his brother abides in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. (1 John 2:10).

Esteem each other better than ourselves and care for other people's affairs and not just our own. (Phil 2:2-4).

Add to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ...as long as you do these things, you shall never fall. (2 Pet 1:6-10).

We do not do these things by ourselves, but allow Jesus Christ to live His life in us. We do them by His grace, as we give all diligence to it.

### Values

So how does the love of God play out in the values that we hold? Church is a good place to start. Some people who claim to have good values are not active members of a church. Since the 1960's, in Western nations, many people began to neglect church. We thought that we did not need it to live good lives. As a result of this, moral, family and social values have been steadily eroded.

In Australia, in the 1960's, most people we knew went to church. On Sundays most shops were closed, so workers could be free to attend churches with their families. We are not advocating a legalistic view of the Sabbath day, but an awareness of the most important values. If people in a society do not put God first, there is no hope for their future.

Today the bottom line is often the dollar. There has been a sharp increase in divorce and with that, an increase in the number of dysfunctional children, bringing down education levels and increasing crime. Abortion levels have sky rocketed where values are increasingly self-centred. In the 1960's the *sexual revolution* meant people started to cohabit without marriage. This has since developed into an acceptance of homosexuality and an increasing tolerance of paedophilia.

The biggest enemy to society is not terrorism, but its own decadence. There is no need to be fatalistic about this. This is not a sign of the end of the world. Decadence has been turned around in the past and it can be turned around again. It will take the involvement of Christians. Instead of withdrawing, Christians must stand up to promote godly values without apology.

### The Church

A humanist will claim to have values, but not a commitment to a church, or to the scriptures. When we have God's love, these are two things that we have a commitment to. John said, "We know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14). God makes us part of His family. Jesus said, "My mother and My brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21).

This means we are committed to fellowship (Heb 10:25). The church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim 3:15). It is where we heard the message of our salvation. Some parents, or grandparents, leave the church when they are offended. How can we love our children, when we devalue before them what is most important? How can we have love when we leave because of offence? *Love does not do that.*

Jesus said, "He who does not gather with Me, scatters." (Matt 12:30). The body increases in love, as every one supplies their part (Eph 4:16). "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." (Eph 5:25). Paul said, "Let no man trouble me, I bear in my body the marks

(wounds of serving) the Lord Jesus.” (Gal 6:17). He showed his love for the Head of the church in heaven, by serving His body on earth. If we do not serve the body, we do not love the Head.

Hezekiah was a godly king of Judah, but his lack of care for the future of others revealed his lack of love. Recklessly, he showed Babylonian leaders the defences of Jerusalem. Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah, saying after Hezekiah died, Babylon would invade Jerusalem. Unbelievably Hezekiah’s response was, “The word of the Lord is good and thankfully it will not happen in my time.” (2 Kings 20:18-19).

*After* this warning Manasseh was born to Hezekiah. In Hezekiah’s last 15 years he raised the worst king in Israel or Judah’s history (2 Kings 21:11-12). Because of Manasseh’s wickedness the warning of the prophets came to pass: the Babylonian exile, when two thirds of the population of Jerusalem died. Hezekiah could not care less, though in the end Manasseh was saved. Many today live like this.

### Marriage

If love is following God’s word, then how does this work out in our marriages and families? When we love the Lord we follow His word. This is not legalism. We are not doing this to be saved, but because the Lord’s love is in our heart. It starts with the matter of who we should marry. The Bible says we should marry in the Lord and not to be *unequally yoked* with an unbeliever (1 Cor 7:39, 2 Cor 6:14).

It is good to get to know the person before we agree to marry them. We should be aware of what they are truly like and whether the Lord is first place in their life. We should also choose a hard working person. Eleazer prayed for a wife for Isaac, that it would be the woman who drew water for all the camels (Gen 24:18-20). This was a considerable amount of work. He was not interested in a lazy girl. A lazy person does not love the Lord.

Love and companionship are important in a relationship. We should marry someone we can be friends with, with whom we like spending time. We should have similar life goals, or at least both desire to go in the same direction in life. This does not mean we should have the same skills, character or professions, but we should have the same overall goals in the Lord. We must be able to work as a team.

In marriage one is not greater than the other. Husband and wife work as a team. This means love and respect from both towards each other. The Bible says man is the head of the house, which means he has final responsibility before the Lord (Eph 5:23). This headship is to serve, love and care for his family in a responsible manner. He has no right to harm physically or mentally abuse his wife or children. He must give his life for his wife, which means gently care for her and love her dearly (Eph 5:25).

The woman should have an agreeable attitude and not be contentious. A contentious woman with an argumentative spirit is a great burden to any person. The Proverbs say it is better to stay in the corner of the roof than to dwell in a wide house with a contentious woman (Pr 21:9). The contentious woman destroys her house with her own mouth and ruins her marriage and family (Pr 14:1, Pr 31).

Both husband and wife should learn not to want their own way, but the Lord’s way. They should yield to each other so the Lord’s will is done in their lives. There is no reason why two people who love the Lord should break up and divorce. The claim of “irreconcilable differences” should not arise when two people yield their own desires to the will of Jesus. “A cord of three (Jesus, husband and wife) cannot easily be broken.” (Ecc 4:12).

“For this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh.” (Gen 2:24). Any husband and wife who allow their parents to control their family are under the

devil's yoke. The husband is the head of the house, not his or his wife's parents. Their parents should support and show a godly example in all things, but they must not usurp authority.

We should listen to our parents, respect and honour and love them and follow godly advice, but not allow them to rule over our family. If any of our extended family requires us to go against the counsel of God's word we must rather obey the scripture regardless of the outcome. Put God and His word first at all times. This biblical truth is not altered by any person's culture.

There should be healthy sexual expression in a marriage. Both husband and wife should seek to please each other and not demand from each other (Pr 5:15-21, 1 Cor 7:3-4). Sex is honourable in a marriage and there should be no taboos, restrictions, traditions or laws hindering it (Heb 13:4). The ceremonial restrictions in the Law of Moses have no legalistic application to Christian marriages. What counts is love. Love does not seek its own, but seeks the other person's good.

The *Song of Solomon* describes love in marriage relationships. The song is about a woman whom Solomon wanted in his harem. The woman however had a true love who was a simple shepherd man. She did not want to be included in the vanity of Solomon's riches and meaningless sexual relationships. The song expresses sex, friendship and love in marriage. We should marry for love.

Divorce is permissible if one partner forsakes the marriage covenant through infidelity, abandonment or life threatening abuse to spouse or children (1 Cor 7:15). In such cases the believer is permitted to remarry, but there should be counsel from godly elders who honour the scriptures. The Lord does not permit divorce and remarriage on any other basis (1 Cor 7:10-11). However, divorce and remarriage is not the unforgivable sin.

### Children

Children need love, knowledge of the word of God, discipline and educational training suited to their skills. Parents must be in agreement as one team, or the children will see the division and hypocrisy, or manipulate one parent against the other to get their own way.

Love means that the parents live according to the will and word of God. If we love our children we obey the scripture. Our life is the example the children need. We teach them with our life. He who pleases himself in the decisions he makes in life, rather than lives from the love of the Lord, hates his children. Love also means the parents are present with their children and do not delegate them to others while they spend their time selfishly.

Teaching the word of God to our children is crucial. It is one of the most common commands in the scripture concerning family. Final responsibility rests with the father to ensure this is done effectively. Deut 6:5-9 told the Hebrew to teach their children the word of God diligently at every opportunity, daily (Deut 32:46-47, Josh 4:5-7).

The Hebrew word for *diligently* means to carefully explain so that the children understand the real meaning of God's word and that it sinks into their heart. This is the responsibility of the family, not of the church or school. The children must know the word of God, know what it means and know how to apply it in their life. Bible story books are not sufficient for this. They must be carefully taught from the scriptures.

Children need discipline. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Pr 22:6). The Hebrew for train means to narrow the path. We train them diligently in the right

path to take, by blocking the wrong paths so they must go the right way. We have to be present with them to do this. It is a 24/7 task. Absentee parents do not love their children.

This takes patient effort on the part of parents. It is easier to relax watching the football and not get up to correct your child when he or she needs it. He who spares the rod hates his child (Pr 13:24). The child must know the cost of disobedience. His soul must be delivered from hell (Pr 23:14).

Discipline must not be abusive. It must not be done in anger, but in self-control, for the child's good, not for our own satisfaction. It must not wound the child's body in any way. It must be consistent, not allowing one thing one day and something different on another day. Alternatives to the rod are harmful. The rod is quick and is then over. Emotional discipline is abusive. Sanctions are drawn out. The Bible not surprisingly is correct in its prescriptions.

We must know what our children are doing at any time and who they are with. We should not allow them to have as friends other children whose families do not hold the same values as us. "Evil associations corrupt good manners." (1 Cor 15:33). This is not optional. As sure as night follows day, whether we like it or not, bad influences will corrupt children. We are not smarter than God.

This is not unnecessarily shielding the child. The child should be nurtured at a young age until he or she has the maturity to make the right decisions. Teenagers generally cannot make right decisions, because they do not have the life experience. We can destroy them by giving them too much freedom too early.

We do not make a person swim in the sewage to make them immune to disease. Neither should we allow children to mix with immoral people to teach them how to handle the world. Train them with godly influences and when they grow up they will not depart from them.

There should be communication, happiness, love and light heartedness in the home. There should be sports, entertainment and time spent with the children showing them home and life skills. There should be open communication so children can know why we think the way we do. This enables them to grow in understanding of life. Families should talk about issues together, so children learn how to think and express themselves.

Children must be taught the work ethic from an early age. They should help in the house and work diligently at school and in sports. They should be taught to show genuine respect to elders and to others, not answering back. They must be taught not to lie. This is not only godly, but will keep them out of trouble later in life. They must see in us the right example of integrity. Our word must be true in money and in everything we say, or children will know we are hypocrites and this will harm their faith.

None of this has to do with legalism, but is the fruit of the love which God gives the born again believer. Faith works by love. When Christ lives in us, we care about others and we do what is right for them according to the scripture (Gal 5:6).

### Godliness

Where the love of God is there will be fruit in godliness. Godliness means exhibiting the qualities of Godlikeness. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is seen in us. It is not our fruit, but His fruit working in and through us to others. Godliness means we act and behave as God would, because we are His children and are like Him.

We are what we do, not what we merely “believe”. “The devil believes and trembles”, meaning his believing does not transform his life (James 2:19). *Worship* refers to the way we live. Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but offer your bodies as a spiritual service of worship.” (Rom 12:1-2). This means worship is what we do with our body. If we count God as worthy it is shown by how we live.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, godliness is mentioned nine times. Paul told Timothy to keep godliness at the forefront of his message in ministry. The gospel must produce godly living in people, or our ministry is vanity. Doctrines that tickle the ear, to attract members and promise them power and prosperity and that do not produce godliness, are false teachings. Many teach pointless doctrines that do not equip people in sound faith and a moral life that glorifies Christ.

As I besought you to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside to vain jangling. (1 Tim 1:3-6).

Our goal is not that people might be happier, or more fulfilled, but that we all might live a godly life. This leads to genuine happiness. “...But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise for the life that now is and for that which is to come.” (1 Tim 4:8). The opposite doctrine is that *gain is godliness*: “...Men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” (1 Tim 6:5).

The goal of our preaching is that we and others should “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” and not be caught up in fruitless debates, disputes and harshness of spirit, laziness and gossip (1 Tim 2:2). Speculations about doctrine are fruitless, unless our study produces godliness.

“But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise yourself rather to godliness.” (1 Tim 4:7). Self-fulfilment and self-actualisation are not the purpose of our ministry, but godliness. We must get our minds off what we can get from God and allow God to transform our lives.

All sound doctrine produces godliness, which is seen by our works. *These are not works of the law, but works of faith*. “We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He has before ordained, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10). Works of the law are those we do to be accepted. Works of faith are the fruit of His Spirit working freely in our life. He that does not have works of faith does not know God.

Godliness is our life style. We reflect the attributes of God in kindness, tender-heartedness, forgiving others, ease with which we can be entreated, industriousness, usefulness, cooperativeness, love, mercy, honesty, straight forwardness, not double tongued, nor proud, deceitful, tempered, bitter or self-centred.

If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine that is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing...(1 Tim 6:3-4).

Doctrines about miracles, that do not produce these qualities in us, are not of God. What fruit does our teaching produce in our life and in the lives of those who hear us? Does our teaching *work*, in the godly or biblical sense?

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Tim 2:22-26).

### Good Works

Good works that glorify God are the goal of God's redemption. To claim to be saved by faith and not exhibit good works is contrary to salvation's purpose and is a lie (1 John 1:5-6). Good works are not what we do to try to achieve acceptance with God, but a fruit of the love which He sows in our heart when He saves us. Peter wrote:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show the praises of him that called you out of darkness into His marvellous light... having your life style honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak evil of you, they may by your good works, which they shall see, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Pet 2:9, 12).

All the apostles wrote on the importance of good works in our lives. A person who claims to be a Christian should be careful to exhibit good works with zeal. Zeal is important. Not just good works, but zealous and industrious in good works. If we claim to be a Christian and are lazy or dishonest, or who do not care for our family and for others in the church, we are self-deceived. We can see in Paul's writings that good works are the purpose of our salvation, as this glorifies God:

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you. (Titus 2:14-15).

Being redeemed from all iniquity does not just mean that we are forgiven, but that we no longer commit iniquity. He saves us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. (Matt 1:21) Good works are the opposite of the hedonistic life styles that are prevalent in the world. Good works are shown by our commitment in using our time fruitfully in serving and not squandering it on self-pleasing.

Redeeming the time for the days are evil. (Eph 5:16).

The life of Christ in us is shown by the way we spend our time. We want to make use of our time, to take every opportunity to be fruitful in Christ. We have too much to live for in Christ to be half-baked and sluggish. Diligence and zeal are fruits of the life of Christ in us. Where they are absent there is no godly life.

God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. (Heb 6:10).

Love labours. Where there is no labour there is no love of Christ within the heart. God not only gives us grace through salvation, but also rewards the work which His grace produces in us. He will not reward

works of law, but He will reward works of grace. This verse also says we show love toward God by serving His saints. This is how Paul remembered the Thessalonians:

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thes 1:3).

Faith puts us to work. Love will lead us to labour. Hope will give us endurance to keep on. The fruit of the Spirit causes us to serve, zealously. If this is lacking in our life, then is Christ in us? In all of this we are serving Jesus: "In as much as you have done this to the least of these My brethren, you have done it to Me." (Matt 25:40).

The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in faith...They profess to know Him, but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient and to every good work reprobate. (Titus 1:12-13, 16).

Laziness and disobedience are a denial of Christ. Paul also spoke about the type of widows the church should support. He said they must have lived their lives in good works, or they should not be supported by the church. We should not support lazy people. It is wrong to give things freely to people who do not work.

But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

Let a widow not be taken into the number under 60 years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she has brought up her children, if she has lodged strangers, if she washed the saints feet, if she relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. (1 Tim 5:6-10).

Paul also described the life of those who do not exhibit good works. He said idle people who talk and gossip and who just go about visiting people for no purpose have already turned aside to Satan:

And they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I would that young women marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan. (1 Tim 5:13, 15).

This does not mean that women cannot be educated and have jobs outside the house. Paul is saying that all of us should use our lives fruitfully in service. When we educate ourselves and go into a career, we should also use our skills to serve. In this passage there is a progression from being idle, to being a gossip and finally to being in opposition to the things of God.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the traditions which you received from us.

For you know how you ought to follow us: for we did not behave disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to you. Not that we have not power, but to make ourselves an example to you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this

we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should they eat. (2 Thes 3:6-10).

Any pastor who does not walk as Paul did is a false pastor, namely, pastors who go from house to house giving false messages and receiving offerings from the people. We met a "missionary" who went on two short trips in one year and none the next year and said, "Prayer is very important." By this he meant having a late bath in the morning, reading the newspaper and a bit of prayer. Paul said every leader and every Christian must work:

Let him who stole steal no more: but rather let him labour with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. (Eph 4:28).

Paul served the church as Jesus served. Though Jesus knew the Father had committed all things into His hands, He took a towel and clothed Himself in servant's clothes of those days and washed the disciples' feet (John 13). We hear people saying it would be a disgrace for us as bishops to do this in our culture. The culture then was no different in this respect. If Jesus as Lord can do that, how much more should we serve one another in love?

### Sin

When love is in our heart, we keep ourselves from sin. We do this for the sake of those we love.

We know that whosoever is born of God sins not, but he that is born of God keeps himself (from sin) and the evil one touches him not (does not bring him into sin). (1 John 5:18).

This is love, that we keep His commandments (1 John 5:2). What is sin? Pleasing our self! Paul lists the manifestations of this in 1 Tim 1:9-11 as those things that are contrary to sound doctrine. "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17). Sin is breaking the law, not the ritual or letter, but the intent (1 John 3:4).

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this reason (sin) was the Son of God manifest, to destroy the works of the devil (sin). (1 John 3:6-8).

John gave ways by which we will know if we are in Him. These are: we believe on the Son of God and abide in that doctrine (1 John 5:11-12); the witness of the Spirit within us (1 John 3:24) i.e. inner faith; the love for the brethren in our heart (1 John 3:14); and that we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3), in regard to who we live for and keep sound doctrine.

### Love is Being Vigilant

Do not think that because we are saved that sin does not matter. The Bible says we should watch diligently. Sin is still sin. It still bites like a serpent. We still reap what we sow (Gal 6:7). The wages of sin are still death. He who sows to the flesh will still reap from it destruction. Jesus Christ came to bring us out of sin, not to forgive while we continue in it.

Be sober (know what you are doing), be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (allows him an entrance). (1 Pet 5:8).

Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We have the victory over him and do not have to fight him, but we must watch diligently. Balaam could not curse Israel, even though he collected the wages of a false prophet, but he did teach Balak how to tempt Israel into sin (Rev 2:14). Israel stumbled and was judged by the law. We are not under the law, but sowing bad seed still reaps a bad harvest.

The Bible says watch diligently, be on our guard, be vigilant, stand as a soldier, be ready, do not allow the enemy an entrance, to come in unawares. The devil has no power over us. He cannot do anything to us. We do not fight him. We do not fear him. We do not give him any attention. We watch *ourselves*. If not, we are a fool and will be taken by his our own lack of preparedness.

Do not think that grace allows us to play with sin. Sin kills. Sin destroys. Do not be deceived. If we are born again, it will not take us to hell, but it will destroy our reward and those we love. For this reason Paul said he kept his flesh under, lest after preaching to others he himself was disqualified (1 Cor 9:26-27). This is not a struggle, but just something we do in Christ. Paul said in any race there is only one winner and he made sure he ran in such a way as he won.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized unto Moses...and did all eat of the spiritual food and did all drink of the spiritual drink...but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they fell in the wilderness.

Now these things are written for our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things...neither be idolaters (covetousness)...neither let us commit fornication...neither let us tempt Christ...neither let us murmur...wherefore let him who stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Cor 10:1-12).

Take heed lest we fall! See also Gal 6:1. Do not walk as a fool. Watch. There are covetous practices enticing many. There are false prophets who are given to greed. Covetousness is unfaithfulness to the Lord. It is idolatry and fornication, making gods out of our desires. Do not listen to a prophet who would lead us astray, even if their words are confirmed (1Kings 13:18-22).

Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up defile many; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. (Heb 12:14-16).

Esau was so negligent concerning the things of God. He was so unaware and so careless that he sold his birthright for a single act of self-gratification. Hebrews tells us to exhort one another daily in these regards (Heb 10:25):

1. Lest any fall of the grace of God, i.e. go back into legalism, works and religious tradition.
2. Lest any root of bitterness spring up and many get caught up in unchristian behaviour that hurts many lives (Gal 5:15).
3. Lest any become so familiar with the things of God that he becomes careless and loses focus of God's purpose and call. Someone can still be in ministry with signs, but inside his heart he has departed from the Lord.

In Ephesians 6 Paul spoke of the armour of God. Paul was speaking about vigilance. The armour protects us against the truth-twisting wiles (thoughts) of the devil. The purpose of this armour is that it helps us to watch over our heart and mind, with the truth of God's word in the gospel. It has nothing to do with fighting the devil or curses. It is to do with vigilantly watching over our heart and mind, lest sin gain an entrance and defile many.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereto with all perseverance and supplication for the saints. (Eph 6:17-18).

Watch! Paul told us, "Having done all, to stand in the evil day." (Eph 6:13). To stand means to watch, so we are not caught unawares. This is not fighting the devil. The same thought was expressed in the Proverbs: "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Pr 4:23). This is vigilance in the grace of Christ.

Therefore, my son; be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...endure hardness as a soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 2:1, 3).

Being a *soldier* does not mean we fight the devil. It means we know how to watch, how to keep ourselves, how to be strong *in the Lord*, how to endure. The Lord will fight for us and will shortly bruise Satan under our feet. It is patience, till He who is coming, comes! How long do we have to stand? Until we win. The love Jesus has put in us strengthens our heart, with joy.

Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Pet 1:8).

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Cor 4:16).

Therefore, seeing we have received this ministry (of such wonderful grace), as we have received mercy (it is not of us), we faint not. (2 Cor 4:1).

### Love Corrupted

Love turns to selfishness when we become the centre. It becomes self-love, love of pleasure more than of God, security in material things and not in God. It becomes love of things and love of money. Paul spoke to Timothy a lot about this. We should also speak about it, not to bring people into legalism, but to locate our hearts. "For where our treasure is, there is our heart also." (Matt 6:21).

"Contentment with godliness is great gain." (1 Tim 6:6). Contentment is not common. Advertising tells us we must have the latest product. Often preaching tells us the same. There is also spiritual ambition and ministerial ambition. Our desires are stirred up (James 4:1). We tell others that God will give them these things if they give money.

For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, let us be content. But they that desire to be rich fall into temptation (compromise, to allure others through their baser instincts) and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you man

of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...(1 Tim 6:7-12).

The "giving to get" doctrine appeals to the baser instincts of man. It is said, "This is what we will get out of it.". "Support this ministry and this is what you will get." The Bible tells us to give to those from whom we do not expect a return. We are not in a club where we scratch each other's back.

Then said He also to him that invited Him, When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor thy brothers, neither you own tribe, nor your rich neighbours; lest they also invite you again and a recompense be made to you.

But when thou make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. (Luke 14:12-14).

Do not think that they enjoyed this advice any more than people would today.

We are told in scripture to give because we *have* received. Giving is not a works that God recompenses. We receive from God by grace. Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give." (Matt 10:8).

We give because of God's love. We give because Christ lives in us and it is our nature. We give because we want the gospel to go out to others so they can have Christ as we do. We give because we obey the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every person. We give because God has been kind to us and has abounded toward us in love through Jesus Christ.

God does not give to us because we first give. He gives to us because He loves us. He gives to us because of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us while we were sinners, not because we did anything. God does not give to us because we put Him in debt. He is debtor to no one. All we have we received from Him. God gives to us because He gave Jesus Christ who took away our sin and through Him He freely gives us all things (Rom 8:32).

People often think in terms of law. They say, "Are you saying we should not give?". We did not say that at all, but that is the first thought of some when we speak about these things. When Christ changes our nature we have a giving nature. Giving to support the ministry is a grace that God includes us in. It is not something we do for God. It is an honour He gives to us to participate in.

We have heard people say, "If we do not tell people what they will get in return they will not give.". If people will not give unselfishly then we do not need their money. We must teach the right things. People say, "The ministry needs money.". Do we forsake the gospel to change the message to raise money? We might get the money, but if there is no genuine gospel, there is no genuine ministry.

We hear preachers saying that God is going to transfer all the money to Christians so He can defeat the devil and bring in the last great revival that will bring Jesus back in His Second Coming. This is just not the truth. God does not need any money to defeat the devil, bring revival to the whole world, nor bring back Jesus. He can do all that He pleases without our gifts.

People are told to give to a ministry and God will cancel their personal debts and they end up in more debt. The way to cancel debt is to change the way we live. We live without things we cannot pay for. It is contentment. *Sew your garment according to the size of your cloth.* "Life does not consist of the

abundance of the things you possess.” An extra possession will not make us happy. It will not satisfy what drives us. It will not change who we are on the inside.

And He said to them, Take heed (watch, be vigilant) and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses. (Luke 12:15).

### Seed Time/Harvest

Scriptures are misquoted. Noah was told that *seed time and harvest will not fail* (Gen 8:22). That was speaking about seasons and agriculture. The text has nothing to do with offerings. 2 Cor 9:6 is quoted in relation to the offering Paul collected for the brethren in famine. Paul said, “He that sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly.”

Paul meant reaping fruit in God, not money. “He multiplies your seed sown and increases the fruit of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9:10). He multiplies the impact your grace has on others. The giving brings “many thanksgivings to God.” (1 Cor 9:12).

Paul said the same in Galatians. He was talking about supporting those who preach the word. He said those who benefit from them spiritually should support them materially:

Let him that is taught in the word communicate (give, share, support) him that teaches in all good things. (Gal 6:6).

Then Paul added to that:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption and he that sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Gal 6:7-8).

Paul is not speaking here about us doing things to make sure we are saved. He is speaking about fruit in God’s kingdom. He said if we live for ourselves we will have no lasting fruit. If we just buy houses and personal investments, they shall all in the end be burnt up. But if we sow our lives into the things of God, then we shall have eternal reward. Paul is not saying that if you give to the teacher of the word, you shall receive a financial harvest. That is not why we give.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal. (Matt 6:19-20).

A lot of the teaching on this subject misses the very motivation Paul used for giving. When Paul was raising funds from the Corinthians to support those brethren in famine, he said he was not telling the saints to give sacrificially, to put themselves in want, while others benefited. He encouraged them to help from what they had over. Paul’s motivation for giving was this:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9).

The motivation Paul gave is totally opposite to the motivation that encourages people to give for what they will get. Jesus gave to make us rich, not in money, but in Him. We were sinners while He died for us. So Paul said to the Corinthians, “You should follow the example of Jesus.” Jesus did not give to

make Himself rich, but to make us rich in knowledge and in life. We give to share. This is the motivation of scripture.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (share); laying up in store for them a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim 6:17-19).

Paul was not asking for an offering for himself, but for the saints in Jerusalem who experienced a famine. And he did not put his hand into the offering! There is a lot going on today with offerings that is just stealing. We display with transparency and honesty what we do with every dollar that is given.

Jesus and the apostles never taught on financial breakthrough. On the contrary, Jesus taught this is what the pagans go after. He said we should seek first His kingdom and righteousness and all these things will be added to us by God. Elijah would not take Naaman's gift, but Gehazi did (2 Kings 5). Abraham would not take money from the king of Sodom (Gen 14:23). Ananias and Sapphira fell due to money (Acts 5).

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. (Matt 6:31-34).

It is true that God blesses us. But it starts with Him. He gives us a new heart. He leads us to give. He supplies our need. He is faithful to us. We give because we are led by God to do so, not to get a healing or a blessing. God does not promise financial prosperity to everyone. None of the first apostles prospered in terms of material possessions, as far as we know, but look what they achieved for the gospel!

"Give and it shall be given to you", is not speaking about money (Luke 6:38). Jesus used this term in relation to our life style. We should be generous and share with each other and all our own needs will be taken care of. This is true, but it is not why we give. We give from love, because of the kindness of Jesus towards us. We forgive because we *have* been forgiven.

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. (Eph 4:32).

In the law it starts with us: "forgive and you shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). In the gospel it starts with God: "forgive even as you *have* been forgiven". One works from condition. The other works from love.

God prospers us through our work. He prospers us through godly living. Many today are teaching that God prospers us through sacrifice. This is the opposite of what God said. This will impoverish God's people. We should be teaching godliness, integrity and honest work and then God's people will prosper. This is how the gospel changes our lives and our nations. It is God's will that we prosper, but by honesty.

There is nothing wrong with prospering if we prosper by honest means. The general prosperity of the community is a good thing, if we are rich towards God.

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have kept? So is he that lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:17-21).

“God delights in the prosperity of His servants”, but prosperity is knowing Him first of all (Ps 35:27). Poverty is not good. It can come about because of corruption, or because of persecution for the gospel, or because of laziness, or lack of education. In youth it is good to work, to build a good foundation for the future.

Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travels and poverty as an armed man. (Pr 24:32-34).

People who preach prosperity doctrines often prosper off the money people give them and then say their prosperity proves the doctrine. That is not proof. People give testimonies that they gave and had a miracle. Thank God. That is good. It does not prove doctrines of covetousness are true.

The seed is the word of God, not money (Mark 8:11, 1 Pet 1:23).

We can stand and ask God to meet our needs without giving Him anything and He will do it. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.” (Ps 50:15). The ministry of the Spirit is free. Giving to get the power of the Spirit is *Simony*, a sin (Acts 8:20).

The teaching of many today on money is no different to the teaching in Luther’s day, when relics were points of contact and indulgences were paid to gain God’s favour. Priests collected offerings, promising forgiveness of sin.

People gave money to kiss relics and were promised time out of hell. The money was used for church building programmes. The urgency of the church’s “need” led them into false teaching to raise the funds, just as it does today. What was the point of Luther’s Reformation if Protestants perpetuate the paganism of the Middle Ages?

Another scripture passage used commonly is:

And Jesus answered and said, Truly I say unto you, There is no man that have left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. (Mark 10:29-31).

This does not mean that we shall necessarily own all these things. Jesus had use of every house and donkey He needed, but He was not insecure: He did not feel the need to own or possess them. He

knew He possessed all things. Those who lay up riches do so because they are insecure. It is a poverty spirit.

We do not know that any of the apostles had 100 houses or lands. So how can this text have been literally fulfilled in their lives? Jesus did not own these things. We have all things that we need. Things are not for us to store up, but to use for the kingdom of God.

### Christian Giving

None of this is to say that people should not give. The workman is worthy of his hire. Some people have the attitude about pastors: "We will keep him poor, You God keep him humble", as though the preacher worked for them and not for God. Some people say, "If God meant this project to go He would supply the money without you asking.". This is like saying, "If God meant us to fly, He would have given us wings.".

Nothing said here means that the ministry is somehow not practical. Businesses are practical. If they spoke this way in business they would be broke. We are to ask in ministry. We are to raise funds in ministry. We should boldly raise funds. We have nothing to be ashamed of. This is for the good.

People should be free to give, without feeling as though their rights have been disrespected when it is asked of them. They should not live selfish lives. We should not have to ask for money, but people get selfish and neglect the ministry of the gospel. We should all be generous towards the ministry of the word, at all times, in season and out of season, when the economy is up, or when it is down.

Some people are slow to give to God. They do not pay their bills this way, but when it comes to the gospel they are slow, keeping the ministry of the word waiting. Others have given more than they can and have personal need. We are not suggesting that people do this. We do not want people to give when they need the money. God does not want people to do this. It is a personal choice.

We do not give back to people who support the gospel, in a monetary sense. People have said to us, "We have given to the mission, but you have not prophesied to us, you have not sent us a monthly word!" No, we "rob" from one and give to another, as Paul did. We will not raise funds for God's work by promising people something in return. This is wrong, especially if we just send prophecies to get donations.

I have robbed other churches, taking wages from them, to do you service. (2 Cor 11:18).

Paul would not take money from the Corinthians to support himself. This was to cut off the boast of the false apostles, so he might win the Corinthians back to the love of Christ (2 Cor 11:10-12). There are reasons why we take from one and preach to another. Someone said, "Pay for the hamburger where you eat it", meaning, give only to your church. How will others get a hamburger, if we just think of ours?

Paul raised money for missions. He asked for it. Are we willing to give back, in ministry? Yes, if people are willing to have our ministry of the word. We are strongly desirous to give to all in this way. Paul desired help to help others and he also desired to impart ministry in Christ to those who helped.

When I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you (at Rome). For I trust to see you in my journey and to be brought on my way from there by you, if first I be somewhat filled by your company. (Rom 15:24).

Here Paul is asking the Roman believers to help support his mission to Spain. In fact, he sees this as their responsibility as believers. So we are responsible to give. Nothing we are saying here means that people should be slack in giving. If we do not give it shows the selfishness of the heart. It is not love. It shows that Christ has done nothing in us.

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves...For even as Christ pleased not Himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached You (Father), fell upon Me. (Rom 15:1, 3).

### Accountability

Love means that we are accountable. It is our duty to be open and transparent, not when we are asked, but *before* we are asked. A duty is something that we fulfil without being asked. When we make enquires people sometimes say, "Do you not trust me?". That is a wrong question. Instead of asking that, as a steward we have a duty to make full accountability of all our financial dealings *without ever being asked*.

This is love. Love gives no appearance of evil, so others will not question the righteousness of God and the faith will not be evil spoken of, to the hurt of others. When we have to be asked to show account, this is not love.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be is found faithful. (1 Cor 4:2).

A pastor should not be the person who controls the money. Money should go through the church accounts and be audited independently. The pastor's family members should not have access to the money or assets of a ministry. Ministry is not a personal or family business affair, though many treat it like this today.

Offerings in the church should not come to the pastor. They should go to the church. The pastor should record everything that he spends. It should be open and transparent.

### Involvement

Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (Matt 5:12-14).

Jesus was speaking here about us holding forth the gospel and the word of life wherever we are. This would mean that we are to speak out and be more concerned about the truth than about our prosperity, or our careers.

It would also mean that our mandate is to be an influence. Fatalistic ideas about the rapture or the end of the world are counter-productive to the mission that Jesus gave to us. To see the troubles in the world today as "signs of the times" is damaging to our calling. Things have been worse before and things now will continue to get worse as long we do nothing.

"Evil rises when good men do nothing". This is the situation we face now in many cultures.

Going back 500 years we find Puritans such as John Owen, George Fox, John Knox and Oliver Cromwell. The Puritans did not get everything right and often made mistakes. They did have a vision for the future and gave their lives to give many a better heritage in the things of God.

Looking forward they saw nations that served God in freedom and the gospel going out to all the earth. They worked hard and *loved not their own lives to death* and God blessed their labours with the fruit that many still enjoy today. They had a clear vision for the future and for what they wanted to achieve on our behalf that live today.

They prayed as the Lord worked in them. Knox prayed constantly, "Lord give me Scotland or I die.". Their whole life was a prayer. They called on king and parliament. If this was not enough they raised armies. The point is they meant business. They were involved. This is the point that we Christians must come to today. We cannot go on living like Hezekiah, saying "Thank God the trouble will not come in my time.".

Islam is one of the major challenges that we face. The answer is not clamping down on immigration: a fortress mentality. It is too late for that in many places. We have the answer in the gospel, so it is not time for us to retreat. Some say the Muslims have an agenda to take over the West. No doubt that is true, but God has an agenda to convert them. The nations belong to the Lord and to His Christ (Psalm 2).

Terrorism is not the main issue. Greed, decadence, moral depravity and indifference of Christians are the greatest challenges today. We should defend our nations against the enemy, but the main threat against our nations is within. Nations cannot defend themselves if they depart from God. Rising debt, family break down and rising ungodly values in society will render democracy inoperable.

So how do we turn this around? We must be involved. The answer in the past has been to retreat and look after number one. This will not do. If the nation loses its saltiness (its Christian witness) it is trodden under foot by men. The church is God's voice to the nation. We must speak and be heard.

We should roll up our sleeves and become part of the solution. We need to get involved in the education problems, in the economic problems, in the political problems, at grass roots and at all levels, to help work and find the answers for hospitals, moral issues, the environment, security, social challenges and theology.

Enough is enough. We have given too much room to the enemy. What is our vision for the next 500 years, if the Lord tarries? It is the turning around of Christian nations, that have been going away from God and it is the conversion of the Muslims to Christ. God loves them. They are not the enemy, they have been entrapped by the enemy and the gospel of Jesus Christ will set them free.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it, the world and they that dwell therein. (Ps 24:1).

Our heart and call is to live in God's love and free acceptance, working out His salvation with all diligence, in our own hearts and lives, at home, in church, trusting that He be honoured in all we do. Our heart is to preach, teach and heal, to reach every soul with the good news of Jesus. Judgement must start in the house of the Lord: what we teach and how we live. We love not our own lives.

We must pray and call upon God as one people, with love for one another in the church, with hearts filled with His Spirit, asking Him to turn things around, to put godliness in the hearts of all people. We put aside *works prayer* and pray with gratefulness for the freedom God has given us, with joy.

God has given us such freedom to call upon Him with all boldness. How dare we not use it? How can we have faith that God is good and will act strongly and not use this faith to call upon Him? The enemy wants to silence the church: silence us before God and silence us before men. But our hearts forbid. We open our mouths to both.