

Handbook 4

Triumphing over Trials

Lessons from the lives of

Ruth, Job, David and Saul.

A Study on 1 John and the Believers Armour

by Albert Fairweather



Ruth deciding:

“Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you”.

“Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem”

Ruth 1:16-19

Back cover

Handbook Studies by Albert Fairweather

Albert and Elaine Fairweather have been in full time service for the Lord for many years. They live in Queensland, Australia.

Albert has been active in church planting in Australia and Kenya. For many years he edited Christian magazines. His teaching is now being published in Book form.



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Email: John Denman jldenman@hotmail.com.au

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Triumphing over Trials

“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love” (1 Peter 1:7-8).

Christians are called to live a life of faith, for temptations to sin and trials of faith will come. The Lord allows these to reveal our weakness, and to cause us to cling to Him. He promises help and to be with us through them all. Those He loves He disciplines so that we might be partakers of His holiness. Joseph was not delivered ‘from’ his troubles, but ‘out’ of them all.

The Book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, gives a history of Old Testament saints who triumphed. We are not to be downcast ‘under our circumstances’, but to rise up and live ‘above our circumstances’.

There is another truth, for if we apply our hearts to His discipline:

‘Our faith will grow under blows’!

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”

(James 1:2-4).

Introduction

Jesus said, **I am the Resurrection and the Life**

His life, death and resurrection is the greatest triumph of all.

Over past centuries a lot of the history of civilisations has been lost, but it is amazing what has survived. Much of this is found in Bishop Ussher’s ‘*Annals of the World*’, a large book covering 6000 years of earth’s history beginning from creation and gleaned from extant records. All this confirms the Biblical record and the discoveries of archaeology, so history and the visible creation points us to God.

We do not question history’s records of the exploits of Alexander the Great or the Caesars, yet many are quick to disbelieve the Bible account of the resurrection of Christ. Here are quotes from the Bible to carefully consider:

What Job said: Job lived before 2000 BC. This was revealed to him by the Lord: *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another”* (Job 19:25-27). He believed in the resurrection of Christ his Redeemer, and in his own resurrection.

What King David’s said: He lived before 1000 BC. *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One (the Christ) to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Psalms 16:9-11). David’s body saw corruption but he lived believing in his own resurrection, and the resurrected of ‘Your Holy One’, the Lord Jesus Christ who arose the third day after His crucifixion.

What Jesus Christ said: He told His disciples: *“The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up”* (Matthew 17:22-23). I have read widely, but I am unaware of any other person ever making such a prediction of his manner of death with a fulfilment!

What Dr. Luke said: *“He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3).

What the apostle Paul said: *“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also...”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Paul was formerly a persecutor of Christians but Christ appeared to him as he travelled to Damascus and turned him from a blasphemer to a believer in Jesus.

We have the record of God's written word, the Bible, and our eternal destiny rests on what we do about it. Do we believe or reject it? We believe men, why not God? *"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater"* (1 John 5:9).

Christ's power displayed: *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father"* (John 10:17-18). While we are born to live, He was born to die and then live again! But what Jesus said came to pass, He arose the third day after His crucifixion and He was seen to ascended to heaven.

The comfort given to Martha: Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* She said to Him, *"Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world"* (John Ch. 11). Then He went to the tomb of Lazarus her brother, who had been dead four days, and raised him from the dead, as He did for a girl of 12 years (Mark 5:35-43) and the son of a widow (Luke 7:11-17).

The guarantee of our Lord: His resurrection guarantees the resurrection of His followers. He said to them, *"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you"* (John 14:19-20).

The believer's confidence: Death need have no fear for a Christian, for it is only the separation of soul and spirit from the body, and the real person lives on: Paul wrote, *"So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Paul's purpose for living: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"* (Philippians 1:21-23).

Life without Christ is hopeless: Paul said, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19). Christianity has more to offer than the passing pleasures of this life. What is life about, why are we here? Life and the complexity of the human body demands a Creator.

The glorious resurrection: *"And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). **Christians have a glorious future as they await their own resurrection.**

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Study 1

The Life and Times of Ruth

Lessons of sad loss followed by great blessings in God's Land.

The setting of this love story is in the early part of the Book of Judges, around 1320 BC. The Moabites were never to enter the congregation of the Lord because they hired Balaam to curse Israel, for he taught them to seduce the men of Israel with the Moabite women (Numbers Ch. 25; Deut.23:3-4).

Ruth was a Moabite, a descendent of Lot from his son Moab, born after incest with his eldest daughter (Genesis 19:30-38). Moab served the god Chemosh with human sacrifices, and by faith Ruth and Naomi overcame and triumphed over tragedy.

By the grace of God, Ruth entered the Lord's congregation along with Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba, the only named female ancestors of our Lord. These women all at times lived lives with sad histories (Matthew Ch.1).

In this Book we have 'Shadows' of Christ and the Church. Boaz is a figure of Christ as Ruth is of the Church, the bride of Christ. Boaz came from Bethlehem as did Christ and was a mighty man of wealth; he was a near kinsman to Naomi (Ruth 2:1). He was the son of Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah, also a man of grace, for he married Rahab the harlot of Jericho, who came to faith hid the spies.

The son of Ruth and Boaz was Obed who became the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. This is the Royal line of the tribe of Judah that Joseph and Mary descended from, and that Jesus was born into, fulfilling the Scriptures.

Chapter 1. Ruth Deciding

Ruth 1:1-5. This Book records events in the days when the Judges ruled, when many in Israel had departed from the Lord and *"everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 21:25).

Famines brought times of testings of faith as in the days of Abraham (Genesis 12:10) and sometimes were God's chastening as in the days of Elijah (1 Kings Chs. 17-18). This should have led to heart-searching, confession and faith in Israel.

God gave Israel the land of Canaan and promised to feed them in times of famine. *"Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed"* (Psalm 37:3 KJV); *"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied"* (Psalm 37:19). The 'land' to be possessed by faith.

The way 'out' with Elimelech, 'down' to Moab

Elimelech (his means 'my God is King') went with his wife Naomi (meaning 'pleasant') and their two sons Mahlon (sick) and Chilion (pining) down in Moab to 'sojourn' (for a brief time) but 'remained' and 'dwelt' or 'settled down' there.

Moab proved to be a grave for Elimelech and his two sons, and Naomi was left a widow with her Moabite daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth. We also will experience times of testing, and at such times we need to wait on God and do His will. If we run from our problems as did Elimelech, we will take them with us.

The way 'back' with Naomi to God and His land

Ruth 1:6-13. Naomi heard that *“the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread”* (V.6). This news came from an un-named evangelist! Do we spread the good news? Naomi acted in faith to return to her people and to her land.

For Naomi to return to Israel, the rough road led to the River Jordan to be crossed to enter the land, and where choices must be made between the LORD God of Israel or the gods of Moab. The River Jordan speaks of death, and being buried by baptism to our old sinful life and risen with Him into new life (Romans Chapter 6).

It was at the River Penuel, where it flowed into the Jordan, that God wrestled with Jacob and touched his thigh and he then limped. There God changed him from 'Jacob' a 'supplanter', to 'Israel' a 'prince with God'. From there he walked with God leaning on his staff (Genesis 32:10;22-32; Galatians 2:20).

When Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the promised land, Joshua erected 12 stones in the bed of the Jordan. These were covered by the waters, speaking of being crucified with Christ. He took 12 stones up to Gilgal, speaking of our being risen with Him into newness of life. Gilgal (a rolling away) was where God 'rolled away' the reproach of Egypt. *“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death* (typified by the stones in Jordan), *that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father* (typified by the stones at Gilgal), *even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4).

Decision time, the gods of Moab or the true God of Israel

Ruth 1:14-15. Orpah's decision. She kissed her mother-in-law and returned *“to her people and to her gods”*. The god Chemosh opened its arms to receive her, and she is like many today who turn back to the attractions of this world.

Ruth 1:16-18. Ruth's decision. She clung to her mother-in-law and together they began the dangerous journey across the Jordan and up the steep hills to Jerusalem and on to Bethlehem. Ruth's decision is recorded and is among the most beautiful words ever written: *“Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me”* (Ruth 1:16-17). Ruth's decision was a true conversion.

What is your decision? Ruth's new faith is seen in her devotion to Naomi and to the LORD God of Israel. She left behind her people, her gods, her home and land.

Back to Bethlehem, the 'House of Bread'

Ruth 1:19-22. On arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi said, ‘Do not call me Naomi (Pleasant) *but Mara*’ (Bitter), for the Almighty (El Shaddai) had brought her back empty. 'El Shaddai' is the 'All Sufficient One' who sustains and nourishes, but He also **disciplines** to produce **fruitfulness** (Genesis 17:1,8). It is through trials and chastening that Christian character and Christ-likeness is formed in us. The name 'El Shaddai' is found 31 times in the Book of Job who underwent severe testing.

Bethlehem has been called 'The city of Motherhood in relation to death' and pictures the sorrow of Israel's mothers through the centuries (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18). Near Bethlehem Rachel died when Benjamin was born (Genesis 35:19) Bethlehem was the birthplace of Christ as Micah prophesied (Luke 2:1-7; Micah 5:2). When the wise men told Herod that the King of the Jews was born there he slew all the baby boys under two years of age (Matthew 2:16-18).

The way back to fellowship with God is often through sorrow and chastening, but to those who are exercised it produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Galatians 5:22-23; Hebrews 12:11). *“Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest”*. This would be in time for the Passover Feast and the 'festival' of Unleavened Bread. God had visited His people in sending rain.

Chapter 2. Ruth serving

The way 'in' for Ruth, to the fields and heart of Boaz.

Ruth 2:1-2. His name **Boaz** means 'in Him is strength'. He came from Bethlehem as did our Saviour (Luke 2:1-7). He was a near 'kinsman-redeemer' of Naomi's (2:20). Boaz and Jahin 'He will establish', were names on the two pillars in Solomon's Temple.

Redemption was by a kinsman (a relative), and was of persons who were in debt or sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49). It was also of property as in the case of Naomi (Leviticus 25:25). Land in Israel could only be sold to the year of Jubilee and then must return to the owner. The law for this this is found in Lev. 25:8-17.

Christ is the perfect Man, and as such is our 'kinsman redeemer, and He has redeemed us with His own precious blood from the 'slave market' of sin. At Calvary He paid the price., *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”* (Ephesians 1:7).

Ruth 2:2-3. Ruth would glean *“after him in whose sight I may find favour* (grace)”. She 'happened' to come to the field of Boaz, for little is much when God is in it! Abraham's servant said, *“I being in the way, the Lord led me”* (Genesis 24:27). He will lead us as we yield to His will and walk by faith.

Boaz the man of wealth and godliness came to his fields from Bethlehem to supervise his harvest. Christ is the Lord of the harvest. We are to be workers together

in His fields to gather in the harvest of souls! Note his greeting to the reapers, “*The LORD be with you!*” And they answered him, “*The LORD bless you!*” Ruth 2:4. He was a real man of God.

Ruth 2:4-9. Boaz, his greeting and interest in his labourers and in Ruth! The servant reported to him Ruth’s humility and diligent service. Our labour of love is not forgotten (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10). He gave her guidance to “*stay close by my young women*”. He would not have his fields disgraced.

Preserve us O Lord from sin and from disgracing Your fields.

Favour and Grace in the fields of Boaz

Ruth 2:10-17. Boaz had been given a good report of her and of her care for her mother-in-law, and she found ‘favour’ with him even though she was a Moabite and they were never to enter the congregation of the Lord. Grace would abound towards her and a full reward would be given for her faithfulness and care for Naomi from the LORD God of Israel under whose wings she had taken refuge.

He passed food to her, a mark of favour. The grace of Boaz was revealed for he ordered that the reapers let grain fall for her to glean. Our Lord also sustains us and gives encouragement in our service. It is in our submission to God’s will that His way for us is revealed.

Ruth 2:18-24. In the home of Naomi, ‘*my daughter*’. Here is seen the wisdom and interest of a godly woman (Titus 2:3-5). Naomi asked, “*Where have you gleaned today?*” then blessed the Lord for His leading. She said, “*The man is a relative of ours, one of our near kinsman*”. Ruth said: “*He said ‘stay close by my young men’*”. Naomi sensed the danger and said: “*go out with his young women*” and remain in his field. Ruth obeyed both Boaz and Naomi and gleaned among the young women in the fields of Boaz and was sustained with grain, both she and Naomi, until the end of barley and wheat harvest.

The Lord of the harvest will also sustain us until He comes at harvest’s end.

Chapter 3. Ruth Resting

Ruth 3:1-5. Here we see Naomi’s prayerful concern for ‘rest’ or ‘security’ for Ruth and her future welfare. She was also aware of the requirements of the culture she lived in and what God’s Law required; customs strange to us today.

Naomi knew that the land Elimelech sold could be ‘redeemed’ or bought back by Boaz because he was a ‘near kinsman’ and had great wealth. Our Lord was of great wealth (Colossians 2:3) and redeemed us at great cost (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Boaz was both able and willing to redeem Ruth. If a man died and had no son, his nearest relative was to marry the widow and then their children would have the inheritance, and the land remain in their family. (Read Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

Ruth 3:6-11. As this strange Jewish custom then required, Ruth went to the threshing floor at midnight and lay down at the feet of Boaz. The threshing floor reminds us of Calvary, where we find rest and forgiveness at the feet of our Lord when we come to Him with conviction of sin, repentance and faith. From this flows a relationship, a union, communion and rest. Boaz would not rest and neither did our Lord until He said, “*It is finished.*” Done is the work that saves.

Ruth 3:12-18. There was a nearer kinsman and in the morning Boaz would settle the matter with him. So Ruth rested at his feet until morning, and we must rest in Christ till we meet Him. Naomi told her to ‘*sit still my daughter*’ until the matter was resolved. Nature would hasten where faith should wait. Our best is often His second-best! Boaz did not rest until the matter was concluded. We can also rest assured, “*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:6).

Chapter 4. Ruth Rewarded

Ruth 4:1. Here we see the love Boaz had for Ruth, taking her from gleaning in his fields to his home and into his heart as his wife!

Our Lord has taken us to His heart and we await His coming for His Bride, the Church, to take us to His home.

Ruth 4:2-8. Here are shadows of our Great Redeemer. Boaz was able and willing to redeem, but trusted God with the outcome. The nearest relative to Naomi only wanted the land. He said, “*I will redeem it*”, but he was unwilling to marry Ruth and have children, for they would inherit the land. There was no immediate profit in this for him, his only interest was **self-interest**, “*I cannot redeem it for myself*”.

The Reward of the Redeemed

Ruth 4:8-22. Boaz purchased the inheritance and redeemed Ruth to be his wife and they had a son, Obed. He was the forebear of David, through whom came our Lord Jesus Christ. The faithfulness of Naomi was also rewarded, for she obtained rest for Ruth and herself and nursed Obed in the home of Boaz. Naomi and Ruth her disciple were women of faith. Their names are recorded in these Scriptures!

From this we can see a lovely progression of spiritual truth: From the threshing floor of Boaz to his home in Bethlehem! From Calvary to the Throne above.

Barley was the food of the poor and wheat the food of the rich: “*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).

Our Lord has paid the price for our redemption and He ever lives to make intercession for us. He has taken us to His heart and would have us rest in Him until He takes us to His heavenly home.

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Study 2

The Life and Times of Job

Lessons in patient endurance under great trials.

This book is believed to be the oldest of the writings in the Bible, and in it the Lord deals with the age-old problem of the 'Why' of suffering. It provides answers for those who suffer, for few have suffered as did Job and none as did Christ our Lord.

Suffering and death are the common lot of all humanity, resulting from Adam's disobedience, and all creation suffers (Romans 8:18-22). People also bring suffering on themselves as also do the actions of others and some who rule.

Job 1:1-5. Job was a Family priest. He lived in the age of the Patriarchs who offered burnt offerings for their families. These events happened before Abraham and before Israel became a nation, for Moses and the law God gave him are not mentioned, but Noah's Flood is (Job 22:16).

He was a man of integrity: Integrity is *'The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles'*, for he held deep convictions in trusting in his Lord. He was *'the greatest of all the people in the east'*. God said he was *"blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil"*. To *'fear God'* means to have *'reverential awe and trust'* in God and to love and obey His word.

He was God's servant, and there was *"none like him on the earth."* He was a judge in his community, for he judged oppressors, delivered the oppressed, caused the widows heart to sing for joy and he gave to the poor (Ch. 29). He was a light-house for God in his community. He had a large family and great possessions.

He would have been a great Chieftain, for he was the *'greatest of all the peoples of the east'* in the land of Uz. We learn from Lamentations 4:21 that the Edomites dwelt in the land of Uz, and their land bordered the eastern side of the Rift Valley down to the southern end of Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aquaba.

Job 1:6-12. *'Now there was a day'*: God is greater than we are and He does not explain to us why He allowed Satan to become corrupted (Ezekiel 28:11-15), or why Satan has access to His presence and why He allowed Adam to sin.

Satan's sphere of activity is the earth, the terrestrial and celestial heavens, and he also has access to the outer courts of the heaven of God's abode. As a result, *'the heavens are not pure in His sight'* (Job 15:15). *"Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens (the Tabernacle and its vessels) should be purified with these (the blood of animals), but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these"* (Hebrews 9:22-23). So, the *'heavenly places'* were purified with Christ's own blood (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Job 1:13-19. Satan attacked Job's family and possessions to hurt the very centre of his and his wife's affections; *"have you not made a hedge around him...touch all that he has...he will curse you to your face"* (Job 1.9-12). So, *'there came a day'* when he lost family and all his possessions. Satan said Job served God for his possessions but this proved to be untrue

Job 1:20-22. Perhaps he and his wife stood by the graves of his children: *"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."* *"In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong"* (Job 1:20-22).

Satan wants to hold captive the souls of men. His bargain is revealed in the King of Sodom, Satan's agent, who said to Abram: *"Give me the persons (souls), and take the goods (possessions) for yourself"* (Genesis 14:21). Abram refused his offer. Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world and all their glory if He would *'Fall down and worship me'*. Satan offers possessions in this life, but in exchange he will control the soul and that leads to eternal damnation.

God keeps a profit and loss account: The Lord Jesus said, *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). *'If riches increase, do not set your heart on them'* (Psalm 62:10).

"To lose your wealth is much, to lose your health is more; To lose your soul is such a loss as nothing can restore"

A rich business man died and next morning one of his staff asked, 'How much did he leave'? Someone replied, 'He left it all'!! Jesus said; *"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"* (Luke 12:15). All that we are and have belongs to our Lord. God can bless a business, but make sure to give the Lord His portion.

Job 2:1-10. Satan attacked Job's health for he reasoned, *'All that a man has he will give for his life'*. All they possessed was taken; their children and then Job's health. In great anguish of soul his wife cried, *"Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"* To Job's wife, life was not worth living and this was what Satan wanted, to cause despair and the loss of faith in God..

In contrast to his wife, Job's faith was deep rooted: *"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"* *In all this Job did not sin with his lips"* (Job 2:9-10). In his great grief he did not blame God. Satan's mistake was that he did not know Job as God knew him. Remember, it glorifies our Lord when we endure trails as did Job.

There is constant war on the saints in *'heavenly places'*, where Satan has access to God's presence (Ephesians 6:10-18). He works to weaken our faith, to disturb and instil fear. In a coming day he will be cast out of heaven into this earth. This will bring this world's greatest tribulation, but his end is to be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation Chapter 12; Ch. 20:10).

Job 2:11-13. Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had agreed together *"to come and mourn with him and to comfort him"*. This was a good thing to do, but instead of comforting him they condemned him.

Job Chapters 3 to 31. Job and his friends had an emotional exchange of words. In a very hurtful way they accused Job of sinning and said that because of this God had sent him this suffering, *'Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves'* (Job 16:2). Their belief was that *'God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked'*! We must be careful not to judge when saints suffer.

To this Job in turn said, *'Miserable comforters are you all'* (Job 11:6), and he wrongly accused God of being unjust. We should be careful if conversations become heated, for when wrong words are said friends can become enemies. All this revealed the heart condition of these men.

Job 33:8-30. Elihu came closer to the truth, for he said that God speaks to a man through a dream, sickness or sends a messenger. God does this to deliver man from the pit (hell) and He has provided a Redeemer.

Job saw his trials as the testing of his faith: *'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him'* (Job 13:15). *'But He knows the way that I take: when He has tested me I shall come forth as gold'* (Job 23:10 with 1 Peter 1-6-9). He longed for a Mediator, for someone to put his hand on God and on Job (Job 9:32). Christ does just this, for He is the mediator between man and God and our Advocate with the Father (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2).

Job 19:23-27. Job had remarkable understanding, for he knew that his *'Redeemer'* lived, and even after death and the corruption of his body, he would see God. This he longed for. This is a quote from Wm. Macdonald: *'The deep questions that Job poses about life, death, suffering, and life after death are all met in the Redeemer he longed for'*, yes, all we need is found in Christ.

Job Chs. 38-41. After all Job's friends finished speaking, the Lord answered Job: *"Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me"* (Job 38:2-3). Some of Job's words displeased God. He had foolishly charged God with wrong and in this he has sinned.

Job had spoken words without knowledge. He had wrongly questioned God's justice and purposes when he said, *"He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth"* (Job 16:9). *"Have I sinned? What have I done to You,*

O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?" (Job 7:20-21).

As this Book ends, God gives Job no reasons for his losses and suffering, instead He reveals to Job His creation power and wisdom. This makes Job aware of his own insignificance. Job cannot do what God has done in creation.

Job 42:1-6. This caused Job to repent, for in defending himself self-righteousness had crept in. Job was brought into the light of God's presence and there he saw his own worthlessness, his words without knowledge and his self-righteousness. This brought him to repentance where God wanted him to be.

Now we come to the desired **'end'** of God's dealings with Job. *"You have heard of the perseverance (endurance) of Job and seen **the end** intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful"* (James 5:11). God was working all things for his *'end'* meaning his *'maturing'*, making Job a better man.

God is also at work in each believer life. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28). All things may not be good in themselves, but they work together for our good, for our maturing and for His glory.

Job 42:7-9. God was also working in the lives of his three friends for their good. God was angry with them for not speaking of Him what was right. They were instructed to offer burnt offerings for their sinful words, and in this way their fellowship was restored with God, and Job was to pray for them.

Job 42:10-17. God restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. We must pray for those who hurt us as did Job for his friends. We then find forgiveness in our hearts for hurtful words spoken, and we are given a love for the most difficult of people. Job and his friends were *'friends'* again!

Job was held up before angels and Satan as an example of God's people of old; now God holds up His suffering Church as an example to angels and demonic powers of His wisdom and power in saints to overcome (Ephesians 3:10-11).

God gives a promise to believers under trials, *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

What we see is that godly saints are held up before Satan and his demonic hosts as examples of God's saving power and grace in delivering from Satan's hold. Perhaps this is the great lesson of this book (Ephesians 3:8-11).

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The Weaver

My life is but a weaving between my God and me, I do not choose the colours, He worketh steadily. Ofttimes He weaves in sorrow, and I in foolish pride, Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside. Not till the loom is silent, and shuttles cease to fly, Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the skilful Weaver's hand, As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.

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Study 3

The Life and Times of Saul and David

Lessons from a King's unbelief and the tragedy of family hatred.

Our Study begins with David, who had a godly heritage, for he descended from Abraham and the royal line of Judah who were chosen to be Israel's kings (Genesis 49:9-10). His father was Jesse, the son of Obed; who was the son of Boaz and Ruth; Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab, all descended from Abraham. These were all people of great faith and became the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel Chs. 1-7. David was born in the times of the prophet Samuel about 1070 to 1080 B.C. Samuel was the last of the Judges and the first of the writing prophets. Samuel's life was a watershed, marking the failure of Eli and his sons as Israel's judges and priests, for Eli's sons did not walk in God's ways.

1 Samuel Ch. 8. Following Israel's defeat by the Philistines and the death of Eli and his evil sons in battle, Israel demanded a king. This grieved Samuel, for God was their king, but they demanded a king to give them victory over their enemies.

Saul anointed as King

1 Samuel Chs. 9 -10. Saul was the people's choice and was handsome, taller than the people. When Samuel anointed him as King, the Spirit of God came upon him. He began in humility but he gradually departed from the ways of the Lord.

Saul showed indecisive leadership and he could not wait on God or for God to lead him to victory. The sons of Aaron of the tribe of Levi were chosen by God as priests and they were the only ones to offer sacrifices. Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, intruded into the priest's office and 'forced himself' to offer a sacrifice. He was afraid of the Philistines and could not wait for Samuel (1 Samuel Ch. 13).

David anointed as king

1 Samuel Chs. 11-13. God sent Samuel to tell Saul: *"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the*

LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

God sent Samuel to anoint a king from among the sons of Jesse. In this process Eliab the eldest was rejected by the Lord as were all seven sons of Jesse. Even Samuel was deceived, but God said, *"man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"*. Finally David, the youngest, was called from following the sheep and anointed as God's choice to be king (1 Samuel 13:14).

1 Samuel Chs. 14-15. Saul also made a foolish oath prohibiting his army from eating any food until his enemies were defeated. He tried to kill Jonathan his own son who was unaware of his oath! He also failed to obey the Lord's command concerning wicked Amalek (Exodus 17:13-16). This led to Saul's final rejection as king. God's word to Saul was: *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

1 Samuel Ch. 16. Samuel mourned for Saul, so God said *'How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?* The Spirit of the Lord came upon David and the Spirit of the Lord left Saul. David became servant to Saul: *"So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armour bearer"* (1 Samuel 16:21).

1 Samuel Ch. 17. David was only in his late teens when his father sent him with food for his brothers who were in Saul's army fighting the Philistines. They were all in great fear of the giant Goliath who was defying the army of Israel. Saul promised to give his eldest daughter Merab as wife to the man who could slay Goliath, and to give him exemption from paying any taxes.

Here we also see the character of Eliab, David's elder brother. He falsely accused David of only coming to see the battle, but there was no battle until David came! Eliab was a self-centred man. David came to Saul and said he would fight the giant. He tried on Saul's armour, but it was too large and heavy, and this shepherd lad had never been in armour before. So David trusted in his Lord who had helped him to kill a lion and a bear and he took five stones from the brook and used his shepherd's sling to kill the giant.

1 Samuel Ch. 18. Saul heard the women singing: *'So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."* *"Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"* This aroused Saul's jealousy and his love for David was turned into hatred. From then on he became David's bitter enemy and looked for every opportunity to kill him.

Saul became afraid of David for he saw that the Lord was with him. He cast a spear to kill him, but David evaded the spear, acted very wisely and led the army in victory over Israel's enemies, and all Israel and Judah loved him.

Saul had promised his eldest daughter Merab as wife to whoever killed Goliath, but broke his promise and married her to Adriel. When he heard that his younger daughter Michal loved David, he gave her to David so she could be a snare to him. Saul would even trade his own daughter to harm David. He schemed to kill David and demanded a dowry that required him to kill 100 Philistines, so David killed 200, and Saul was even more afraid of him.

1 Samuel Chs. 19-30. "So Saul became David's enemy continually", and in these chapters we see how David, with his wife Michal's help, escaped, and began his life as a fugitive. Saul then gave Michal, David's wife to Palti.

Ahimelech the Lord's priest at Nob, gave David bread and the sword of Goliath. He then fled to Akish the Philistine king of Gath and again was afraid for his life and pretended to be mad. He then went with his young men to the cave of Adullam where many gathered to him.

When Saul heard that Ahimelech had helped David, he had him slain along with all the priestly families, women and children, greatly adding to his sins. Daily David and his men were in danger, but the Lord protected him and his men, and on two occasions he could have killed Saul but he refused, saying that he would not stretch out his hand against Saul, who had been anointed by the Lord to be king. David waited for God's time to become King and Saul was slain in battle.

David's heart attitude revealed

David had a shepherd's heart, for he was taken from following the sheep to shepherd Israel and was a wise and caring King (Psalm 78:70-72). In his heart he meditated and had close communion with the Lord. David was a prophet and his beautiful Psalms were inspired by the Holy Spirit who was **with** David even as a youth, and **came upon** him for God's special ministry in his life.

He was badly treated by Saul, his father-in-law, over Merab and Michal Saul's daughters, yet he did not become bitter. He was merciful and twice spared Saul's life, for He would not touch the Lord's anointed. He waited on God and for God's timing to become King. Eventually, after many trials he became king and united the kingdom and defeated all enemies.

Sadly, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and had her husband Uriah the Hittite, his faithful warrior and not of Israel, murdered in battle (2 Samuel Ch. 11). The best of men can fail. His repentance and confession was real. "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Read Psalm 51). Repentance and confession leads to God's forgiveness, and this encourages all

who fall to turn back to following the Lord. But God brought good out of evil, for Bathsheba became the mother of Solomon, *'the beloved of the Lord'*.

He suffered the consequences of his sin within his own family, for his son Absalom turned against him. He showed grace and trusted men like Abner once they gave him allegiance. God saw his real motives, for he was *'a man after God's own heart'*. The Lord also looks into our hearts and sees our longings to serve Him. "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalms 37:4).

David is numbered among the heroes of faith in Hebrews Chapter 11. God does not record the sins of Samson or David. This is also true for us when we forsake our sin: God's word says: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, **and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more**" (Hebrews 8:12).

David retained faith in God under great trial and praised God to the end.

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Study 4

The Book of JUDE

Jude calls on God's people to remain faithful to the Lord and His word in days of apostacy when many depart from the faith.

Jude and **James** were half - brothers to our Lord (Acts 15:13) and were among those who did not initially believe (John 7:5). But after Jesus rose from the grave, Jude became a humble servant. He was a married Bible teacher and wrote this letter between A.D. 67 - 80 (1 Corinthians 9:5).

Jude 1. Jude was a **'bond servant'** or **'slave'** of Jesus Christ, and he addressed those who are **called** (by God and chosen), **sanctified** (set apart for God's purposes) and **preserved** in Christ Jesus (kept secure unto eternal life). This is the permanent position of all **saints**, 'the set apart ones' who are true believers.

Jude 2. **Mercy** is an act of God in forgiving sinful man. **Peace** means 'to join together', it is 'heart tranquillity' with our hearts joined with God's. **Love** is to be multiplied to all saints and all mankind, and love fulfills the law.

The danger of apostates

What is 'apostasy' or 'falling away'? It is the act of a **professing** Christian **'falling away'** by deliberately rejecting revealed truth as to the Deity of Christ and redemption through His shed blood and sacrificial death for sins on the cross. He is an unsaved person, devoid of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. He is one who 'professed' with his mouth to believe in Jesus, but in his heart he never *'believed to the saving of the soul'* (Heb. 10:39) and later 'falls away' and openly rejects Christ.

Jude 3. His great concern: He was *'diligent'* to write to exhort believers about *"our common salvation*. 'Common' means that it is available or 'common' to all who will believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners.

He wrote to exhort them *"to contend earnestly for the faith"*, that is to uphold the apostolic teaching against all error, *"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"*. This teaches us that there is **no new revelation**, for the Bible is complete. There can be no compromise, for false prophets and teachers add to or take from God's word, and are excluded from heaven (Revelation 22:18-19).

Jude 4. He wrote to expose or unmask these 'apostates' who 'depart' or 'fall away' from the truth. They are unsaved men who *'crept in'* by stealth, and *"who long ago were marked out to this condemnation"*. They were long ago marked out even in Old Testament times for God's judgment.

These *'ungodly men'* turned *"the grace of our God into lewdness"*, that is His unmerited favour to sinners turned into immoral and covetous practices, and even went so far as to *"deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ"*.

This marks out all apostates, men who pretend to be God's prophets or teachers but deny it by covetous living and false teaching, as did covetous Judas and lustful Balaam. They are 'professing' but not 'possessing' true faith. Jesus said of such, *"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ... by their fruits you will know them"* (Matthew 7:16-20).

Apostasy leads to sinful living, and this is the *'doctrines of demons'* exposed by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-4. Believers need to be discerning, and test all teaching by what the Bible says. His *'Thus says the Lord'* puts an end all error.

Historical Examples of Rebellion

Jude 5 – 7. The example of Israel's unbelief. Not all who came out of Egypt entered the land, for many in their hearts never left Egypt. Their unbelief corrupted them on their way to Canaan and they could not enter God's rest (1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Psalm. 106; Hebrews Chs. 3 & 4).

The example of the angels. Some of these abandoned their proper domain and followed Satan (Lucifer) in his rebellion against God (Revelation. 12:3-4; 20:10). Their doom is certain, and for Satan's fall see Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-16; Luke 10:18 and 2 Peter 2:4.

3. The example of Sodom & Gomorrah. They gave themselves over to homosexual immorality and violence, and God judged them, they *"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"*. Such are held up as a warning example, and such will not enter the kingdom of God (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 20:13).

Jude 8. These are 'dreamers. Sensuous people who defile the flesh by licentiousness (2 Peter 2:18-22). They ignore and despise those who are God's

appointed authorities and speak evil of *'dignitaries'*, those who are rulers to whom respect must be shown to (Romans 13:1-7).

Jude 9-10. Michael the archangel. Even this mighty angel and great dignitary, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses would not revile or accuse him, but said *"The Lord rebuke you"*. The devil probably wanted the burial place of Moses to become a place of idolatry, but God buried him and no one knows where (Deuteronomy 34:1-6). Some people today rebuke the devil, but we have no authority to do that. The Lord's prayer says *'deliver us from the evil one'* (Matthew 6:8-13). These apostates with natural instinct are devoid of the Holy Spirit and ignorantly speak evil like unreasoning animals and are brought to ruin.

Jude 11. The 'way' of Cain. His 'way' was a religion of **works and self-will** without a blood sacrifice, for he offered the fruits of his labour instead of shedding of the blood of the sacrificial lamb that God required for this pointed to Christ (Genesis Ch. 4). God's word says: *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul"* (Leviticus 17:11), and *"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

Jude 11. The 'error' of Balaam. He thought that God must curse Israel, but he was ignorant of the justification of a failing people sheltered under the blood of the Passover Lamb, a people who were called and set apart by God.

His **'error'** was ignorance of justification by faith alone, and his **'way'** was covetousness (2 Peter 2:15); his **'doctrine'** corrupted the men of Israel and led them to sin with the women of Moab (Numbers Chs. 22 to 25; Rev. 2:14).

Jude 11. The 'rebellion' of Korah: He rejected and rebelled against God's appointed leadership of Moses and Aaron. The earth swallowed him, his family, his possessions and all his followers (Numbers Ch. 16).

Jude 12. Apostates described and their doom. Serving only themselves, they are covetous, clouds without water – that is they are devoid of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). They are carried about by the changing winds of the teachings of false prophets and apostles, the surmising's of corrupt men (Ephesians 4:14). They are *'twice dead'* trees torn up by the roots, without any good fruit from their destructive ways and are exposed to the spiritually discerning,

Jude 13. They and their teaching and corrupting influences are described as being like raging waves of the sea, wandering stars out of their course. They and their followers are heading for the blackness of the darkness of hell.

Jude 14-16. Enoch prophesied about them and the coming of the Lord **'with'** His saints to **execute judgment** on all who rebel against His authority with their harsh words, corrupting teachings and ungodly deeds (Revelation 19:11-21).

This coming of the Lord is not to be confused with His coming **‘for’** His saints at the ‘Rapture’ to take them to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Jude 17-19. The apostles of our Lord, Paul, Peter and John, warned against men who are mockers of godliness, who walk according to their own ungodly lusts; sensual men causing divisions, not having the Holy Spirit.

Great Lessons from Jude

Satan blinds the minds of those who **believe not** (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). The unsaved **‘natural man’** cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God and the true doctrine or teachings (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). Such people are open to Satanic deception leading to destructive teachings (2 Timothy Chapter 3).

It is only true believers, born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit, who walk with the Lord, who can be kept from Satanic deception. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, their teacher who guides them into all truth (John 14:15-17, 26).

Four steps to follow in days of Departure:

Jude 20-21. Step 1. Believers are exhorted to maintain themselves in a strong spiritual condition, *“building yourselves up in your most holy faith”*. This is done by daily Bible reading and prayer, meditating on and obeying God’s word. In this way Christians learn to rely on the Lord and becomes aware of truth and error.

Step 2. Prayer should not be mechanical but fervent in the Holy Spirit, being watchful in the same lest we enter into temptation (Eph. 5:14-18; 1 Peter 4:7).

Step 3. *“Keep yourselves in the love of God”*. This means walking in the light of God’s word, being watchful against any sin that casts a shadow over our lives and spoils fellowship with the Lord. Beware of any actions or words and ways that grieve the Holy Spirit (1 John Ch.1 gives teaching on this subject).

Step 4: Keeping in mind the imminent return of our Lord, being thankful for past and present **mercies** along life’s journey, and looking forward to the future **mercy** of our Lord Jesus Christ leading to eternal life when He returns to take us home to heaven.

Jude 22. Making a *‘distinction’* by showing compassion on believers weakened by apostasy causing them doubts and fears. Help them by strengthening their faith in divine truth and in the faithfulness of God. He is the refuge for His own in times of departure from truth and persecution, indeed, in all times along the journey of life.

Jude 23. Others are to be given strong warning against sinful practices and associations, seeking to instil **‘fear’** in them as they are in danger of falling victim to the fleshly sinful lusts of this age. For, *“In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil”* (Proverbs 16:6). In this way He guards His people against all evil.

Jude 24-25. All glory must be given to our amazing God, for Jude closes with a lovely benediction: *“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling”*. The Bible also says: *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”* (Ephesians 3:20).

He is also able *“To present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”*, thus having a perfect standing with Christ forever in heaven!

“To God our Saviour who alone is wise”, for His wisdom exceeds all the wisdom of men and angels. To our wonderful Lord and Saviour:

To Him who gives Triumph over all Trials, “Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever”

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Study 5

The Armour of God

God provides for Christians to triumph in spiritual conflict and the trials of life and in their walk and warfare in God’s plan.

Christians are involved in a spiritual warfare. The devil and his angels and demons are actively and aggressively opposed to Jesus Christ and to those who believe in Him, and this has been ongoing from the Garden of Eden to the present time as Satan seeks by all means to disrupt God’s plans.

The Lord inspired the apostle Paul to write the book of Ephesians to prepare Christians to overcome our enemy in this battle. Please read his letter to them:

Ephesians 4:27 and 5:15-16. Christians are warned not give a **place** or **ground** for the devil to occupy in their lives. He accuses the brethren night and day before the Lord (Revelation 12:10; Job Chs.1&2). *“See then that you walk ‘circumspectly’ not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil”*.

To *‘walk circumspectly’* means to walk carefully and accurately, for the days are actively evil in opposing all that is good and of God. *‘Redeeming the time’* means to ‘buy up’ and make ‘a wise and sacred use of each opportunity’. We have opportunities to serve the Lord today that we will never have again. Psalm 90:12 says: *“So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom”*.

The Roman soldier’s armour, weapons and dress illustrates the spiritual protection Christians are to wear:

Ephesians 6:10-13. This is how to prepare for this warfare: *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”*

The enemy and the armour: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”. “Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:12-13).

The need for truth and righteousness in this warfare:

Ephesians 6:14. The belt of truth for the waist: *“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth”* The first piece was not really armour, but a wide leather belt worn around the waist, on which ‘hung’ all he needed. His sword, food and money bag, rope and darts, all he needed on long marches and in battle. It also held his protective garments in place; on his chest a breastplate of thick leather or steel and a thick leather skirt protecting his upper legs and thighs.

This sets before us the importance of ‘truth’ in our lives, for all ‘hangs’ on living truthfully in this world. For we represent Him who was *“full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). That is why Jesus said in His prayer; *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth”* (John 17:17). ‘Sanctify’ means to be ‘set apart for God’.

God’s word instructs us to know Him who is truth, and who equips us to know and apply truth in our lives. The devil will defeat us if he can make us untruthful in any situation. Then he strips away from us the usefulness of the rest of our armour, and we become defenceless and unable to witness effectively.

The breastplate of righteousness: Accompanying ‘truth’ is this breastplate of thick leather or steel protecting the soldier’s vital organs, especially his heart. Righteousness has been described as living *‘right and wise’* before the Lord. It means overcoming the evil within us, for we are representatives of Christ. As sons of the living God, we are called to walk in all the dignity of sonship.

In Christ we have **‘positional righteousness’**, for He is all that we are not; *“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1:30). For *“your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:1-3).

We are called to have **‘personal righteousness’**. This means living righteously as a way of life. *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother”* (1 John 3:10).

The delivering power of the gospel of peace

Ephesians 6:15. The Soldier’s Footwear: Roman soldiers wore in battle a leather boot with nail studs for grip. To lose one’s footing could be fatal, so boots must be worn, *“having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”*. We must not lose our footing through inner emotional unrest.

The *‘gospel of peace’* brings peace to our hearts, delivering from fear, anxiety and past failures, for Satan will take advantage of this to leave us weak in spiritual conflict. The Lord has made special provision for us in His word so that we can have a good grip on our relationship with Him, having His forgiveness for past failures and knowing we have His support in this battle!

Aspects of His peace: Jesus, is our peace (Ephesians 2:14); He preached or proclaimed peace to those near and we who were far off (Ephesians 2:17) and He *“made peace through the blood of His cross”* (Colossians 1:20).

We can have this peace: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7).

Jesus left us His legacy of peace, for He said: *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). It is wise to cast all your cares upon Him!

The need for faith in this warfare:

Ephesians 6:16. The Shield of Faith: The Roman shield was large enough to protect the body, and the Legions went into battle with shields locked together in front and on each side. Others held shields overhead to protect from flying arrows and darts burning with pitch. *“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one”*.

Faith is simply taking God at His word, and acting on it. When God gives us even a small opening to serve Him, we should venture out in faith and act, for small opportunities can lead to larger ones! Our God is great and opens doors! We need an unshakable faith in God’s word and His faithfulness. *“And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

Faith gives the victory, for through faith the heroes of Hebrews Chapter 11 overcame and gained the reward. We want to work things out for ourselves, but God’s word says, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Corinthians 5:7). Our Lord gives the conditions for guidance, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths”* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Protecting the mind in this warfare:

Ephesians 6:17. The Helmet of Salvation: The helmet of the Roman soldier protected his head. *“And take the helmet of salvation”* Up to here, all is defensive armour! We need to protect our minds from fear and doubts about our salvation, for this will cripple us in our ability to serve the Lord.

The assurance that we are saved is found in the word of God. Jesus said: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.” (John 10:27-30).

God's word gives great and precious promises: No “height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). Every believer is secure in His hand.

How could we ever doubt when Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life (a present possession), and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24)

Weapons for attack in this warfare:

Ephesians 6:17. The Sword of the Spirit: The short Roman sword was for attacking the vital parts of an enemy. “And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

The usual Greek for ‘word’ in our Bible is ‘logos’. Here the word is ‘rhema’, referring to individual ‘sayings’ found in our Bible. When Jesus was led into the wilderness and tempted by the devil, He took a single ‘saying’ or ‘rhema’ from the whole ‘logos’ of God’s ‘word’ to resist Satan. In the verses of our Bibles are many ‘swords’ or ‘rhema’, and we can with wisdom use ‘the sword (‘rhema’) of the Spirit’, and select a verse from our Bible to meet any situation.

The power of prayer

Ephesians 6:18. All prayer: Paul stressed the importance of prayer as a weapon, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”

Throughout the Bible we see prayers answered and great things done for God. James wrote: “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). God in His own time and way will answer.

We should begin the day with a Bible reading and prayer, and it will help us to face all that the day holds. We should take all things great and small in prayer to the Lord, “in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

There is an old saying: ‘More things are wrought through prayer than this world dreams of’. We are to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give

thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 18).

Jesus said, “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

Peace in the heart with prayer completes the armour God provides.

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Study 6

The Book of 1 John

Triumphing over sin, false teaching and antichrists.

The author is John the apostle, from internal evidence and confirmed by the writings of the early Church Fathers. The date is believed to be between AD 80 and 95. John survived to old age and was the only apostle not martyred.

The brothers James and John were called ‘the sons of thunder’, but our Lord did a work in their lives, changing them into godly and caring apostles. James was martyred by Herod (Acts 12:1-2). John was the disciple who leaned on Jesus breast, and was one of the inner circle of disciples composed of Peter, James and John, those closest to Jesus on a number of occasions.

John wrote to his ‘**little children**’ who were in the world, and this is mentioned nine times and gives insight into the heart of this old man. His three letters reveal his love and care for the children of God. He wrote to protect them from the ways of the world, with warnings about deceivers with false teachings called antichrists.

John reveals his concern for them and us, that we also might enjoy true fellowship with the Lord and His children (2:18-19). Also, that we might know that Christ is the eternal One, God manifest in flesh.

He also wrote to combat the false teaching called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism briefly explained

1. These Gnostics were ‘intellectuals’ who claimed a special ‘**knowledge**’ (Greek, **gnōsis**) superior to the apostles, but it was only ‘head knowledge’ for those ‘initiated’ into their error, and not the heart ‘full-knowledge’ (**epignōsis**) of Christ.
2. They troubled the church by teaching that Jesus was only a man and that the Christ came on Jesus at His baptism and left Him before His death on the cross.
3. They taught that the human body of ‘flesh’ was inherently ‘evil’, so they rejected the incarnation in flesh and the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. They taught that a host of beings (angels that included Christ) formed a bridge between mankind and God. This attacked Christ's uniqueness and redemptive work. Satan's aim is to insert error into true teaching.

These false teachers were not saved, and thus were 'antichrist', those who were against and opposed to Christ.

Chapter 1

The Basis of true Fellowship

v. 1. True fellowship is only found in 'knowing' Christ (Greek: **epignōsis**). This is a 'full knowledge' within our hearts!, *'That which was from the beginning'*. This reveals His eternal 'being' with God the Father from all eternity.

The 'beginning' is at Creation and at His birth into this world, revealing His perfect humanity for He was heard, seen and handled as the perfect Man by His disciples. From His word we can also understand or comprehend in some measure.

The 'Word of life' (Greek Logos), This is God expressing Himself by **words** and revealing Himself in **flesh** (John 1:1-4). This is Christ, God manifest in flesh, the very foundation of the Christian life and faith (1 Timothy 3:16). There is no fellowship with those who deny this.

v. 2. How 'that eternal life' was manifested. The Word 'became' 'flesh' for God was His Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit coming upon the virgin Mary, and in this way bringing "*that eternal life*" into this world (Luke 1:35).

The 'Shekinah glory' that rested on the Tabernacle and Temple (Numbers 9:15) was lost to Israel as is recorded by the prophet Ezekiel. This 'glory' now 'dwelt' or 'tabernacled' among us (John 1:14-18); His outward heavenly glory was now hidden in Christ's humanity, yet it was revealing **God's glory in Christ**, seen in Him who was "*full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). Sadly, the Jews refused to accept and believe Him and they "*crucified the Lord of glory*" (1 Corinthians 2:8).

v. 3-4. Resulting in 'Fellowship' for all believers. *'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you'*. This was the witness of the apostles, given so that we might enjoy 'fellowship' together, that means the 'things we share in common in this faith'. This 'fellowship' is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. His name 'Jesus' reveals His perfect humanity and in Him dwelt deity. 'Christ' is 'Messiah', the 'Anointed One'. This apostolic witness and fellowship give to believers' fullness of joy!

The world cannot know or experience this joy!

v.5. **Maintaining Fellowship.** Our Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world and this is the message Jesus gave (John 8:12). God is holy, righteous and pure. The darkness of sinful living cannot exist with the Light of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 6. **Living a lie.** Those who profess fellowship with Him, yet walk in darkness, not practicing truth as a habitual way of life, and are not saved. This is explained in 1 John 3:4-10.

v. 7. **The Basis of Fellowship.** Believers who habitually walk in the light have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with fellow Christians. All Christians are **in** the light, but problems among them stem from not **walking** in the Light! God's provision is that the blood of Christ is continually cleansing all believers from their sin, all those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Where there is the life of Christ within there will be righteousness. Where there is His light shining in the heart there will be love.

v. 8-9. **Self -deception is the death of fellowship.** Christians have sin 'in' them, but not 'on' them! We have 'Judicial' forgiveness for 'sin' at our conversion. We still have the old **sin nature** but also a **divine nature** within us. Our old man, or fallen self-life was crucified with Christ at the cross, so now in union with Christ, we have put off the old man. This is our **position** in Christ.

In our everyday **practical** lives we are to put off the old man and put on the new man, so as to be closer to what we are in Christ! As the word of Christ dwells in us and we are led by the Spirit, the mind is renewed, the old man becomes weaker and the new man stronger (read Colossians 3:1-17).

We need to be totally honest and acknowledge by confessing to Him the truth about ourselves, for this enables us to walk in His light.

v. 9. **Maintaining Fellowship.** Now 'sins' are a family matter between the Father and His children and need 'parental' forgiveness! If we sin, we do not **lose** our salvation, we lose the **enjoyment** of our salvation. It does not affect our **union**, but it does affect our **communion**, our fellowship with the Lord and each other and our contribution in serving Him. **To confess means we do not hide our sins. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"** (Proverbs 28:13).

Chapter 2

Our Advocate with the Father

v. 1. God's **standard** for His people is **sinless perfection**, something they are unable to be. He is still our Father if we sin, and His **provision** for His people is a **righteous Advocate**, one who draws alongside to support, help and **intercede** for us

with our heavenly Father. This is the ministry of our **great High Priest**, the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God who ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

We have two Advocates, Christ and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).

v. 2. *“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins”*. **Propitiation** means that Christ *“Made a satisfaction for sin through His sacrifice.”* It is related to the word for **‘Mercy Seat’** where the blood was sprinkled that ‘covered’ (made ‘atonement’) for sins (Leviticus Ch. 16). Our Advocate is also our Redeemer who shed His blood to satisfy all of God's holy and just demands. His sacrifice is all sufficient, but sadly, not all will accept Him.

But one who did was the tax collector: *“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful (propitious) to me a sinner!”* (Luke.18:13).

Propitious means, ‘God, be to me just as you are when the blood is sprinkled on the Mercy Seat to forgive sins’.

v. 3-4. **The marks of those enjoying fellowship with Him.** Obeying His **commandments** is to know Him, but to profess to know Him and be disobedient is to be untruthful (1 John 3:23-24; 5:3; John 14:21-24).

v. 5. They keep what is written and they desire to please Him. Then His love is **perfected** or **completed** in them by the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables them to reach God's desired end.

v. 6. To abide in Him is to walk as He walked. For more teaching on ‘abiding’ read John Chapter 15.

v. 7. Love for the brethren is the old commandment of the law, and also what Jesus taught His disciples *“from the beginning”*. It was true in His life, for He loved us even unto His death on the cross. (Read John 13:34-35 for His command). We should not always be looking for something new, or claiming to have ‘superior knowledge’ as did the Gnostics. We must simply obey His word.

His new commandment

v. 8. Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”* (John 13:34). The law of Moses said to *‘love your neighbour as yourself’* (Lev. 19:19). It is new because of what Christ did: **‘as I have loved you’**. This was a new quality of love from God, for He went to the cross for the sins of the whole world! It leads to darkness passing away. The importance of love is further explained in 1 John 4:7-21.

v. 9-11. **About Light and Darkness!** There are those who profess to have this Light (love), but if they hate their brother they are continuing in darkness. The one possessing light, and loving his brother, does not stumble, or offend others. Those in darkness (as were the Gnostics) often have a hatred for true believers. They are blind in their beliefs, actions and to their lost destiny of eternal separation from God in hell. Loving one another and enemies is the proof that one is dwelling in the light of God's love!

v. 12-14. **Little children:** By knowing and loving Him, young believers grow in the enjoyment of this fellowship. John addresses **all** his beloved **‘little children’**. The best news is they are forgiven for His name's sake.

Fathers: John then addresses **‘fathers’** who are **spiritually mature**, for they know Him and enjoy fellowship with the Son and are settled in their faith and unmoved by false teaching.

Young men: They are addressed, for they are **over-comers** of the evil one, being strong in combat with the word of God abiding in them because the word is their daily food. We must do this to overcome the evil one.

Babes: His ‘little children’ are then again addressed for they had known the Father and this gives them the assurance of their salvation.

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Dangers to Fellowship

v. 15-17. The challenge to all believers is to either love the Father or to love the world. The **‘world’** (Greek ‘kosmos’) is the order, arrangement or **‘world systems’**, governed by fallen man and coming under Satan's control. The ‘world’ is not always used in a bad sense - see John 3:16; Romans 1:20.

The lust of the flesh are our sensual bodily appetites coming from within, things that naturally appeal to us. Eve saw that *‘the tree was good for food’*. **The lust of the eyes** are evil desires coming through our eye gate. Eve saw that it was *‘pleasant to the eyes’*. **The pride of life** is promoting self for glory and ambition. Eve saw the fruit of the tree *‘to be desired to make one wise’* (Genesis 3:1-7).

All this is not of the Father but of the world, and it is passing away. “But he who does the will of God abides forever”.

v. 18. **Warnings against deceivers.** John had taught them that Antichrist would come who would be a counterfeit Christ with a false Gospel. He will be preceded by many antichrists (Read 2 Thessalonian Ch. 2). It is the last hour and today many ‘antichrists’ are active in this world. The Antichrist will soon be revealed.

v. 19. How they are recognized. They departed from 'us', they walked away from the apostles. They *“transgressed and did not abide in the doctrine of Christ”* (2 John 9). A true faith will continue in the truth of God's word.

v. 20-23. Believers have an inbuilt warning system! The Holy Spirit within gives them the ability to recognize the true or the false (1 John 2:27). John writes to confirm them in truth and to warn of the Gnostic lie, for no lie is of the truth. To deny the Son is to deny the Father (Matthew 10:32-33).

v. 24-27. The truth abiding within. This is the **word** of God abiding within those who receive the teaching of Christ and His apostles, for they have the promise of **eternal life** (Colossians 3:1-4) and the anointing of the **Holy Spirit** abiding within, teaching and leading them into all truth. We still need teachers, but the Holy Spirit within makes us aware of what is truth and what is error. *“For He dwells with you, and shall be in you”* (John 14:17).

v. 28-29. Believers must abide in Him to avoid being ashamed at His appearing, and they should habitually practice righteousness until it becomes a way of life.

Chapter 3

The Children of God and His appearing

v. 1. We who believe **permanently** enjoy His love. John wonders at this love for it is a heavenly love and not of this world. People of this world do not understand or know what it means to be the children of God, for they rejected and crucified our Lord Jesus when He was here proclaiming this love (John 3:16).

v. 2. We are **now** His children, and when we **see Him** at His coming, we shall be like Him. He is now at work changing us inwardly, but when we see Him, we will be instantly changed to be like Him (1 Corinthians 15:49).

v. 3. This is a life changing, purifying and sanctifying hope. *“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”*. His coming spurs us on to daily live pleasing to Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Sin and the Children of God

v.4. A non-Christian is a person who commits sin as **a way of life** without any concern that he displeases God, and such sin is defined as lawlessness, for this is living outside God's laws.

v. 5. A true Christian is one who has received Christ as Saviour, for He was **revealed** to take away all sins by dying on the cross. He was the sinless Saviour, for *‘in Him there is no sin’*; Peter says *‘He did no sin’* and Paul *‘He knew no sin’*.

v.6-7. A child of God is one who abides in Him and does not **practice sinning** as a way of life. One practicing sinning has not seen or known Him and is unsaved. So do not be deceived, the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

v.8. The devil sinned from the beginning for his work is seen in the fall of Adam and Eve. But the good news is that the Son of God came into this world that He might **destroy** (to sever, break, demolish) the works of the devil. Those who would deceive and teach error are known for their sinning. Jesus said, *“Therefore by their fruits you will know them”* (Matthew 7:20).

v.9. A summery. Whoever has been born of God does not practice sinning, for His **seed** (the Word and the Holy Spirit) remains or abides in Him. Without the Spirit of God no one can resist sinning as a way of life.

v.10. God's children can **love** and be **righteous** because the Holy Spirit is in their hearts (Romans 5:5). Those who sin without a concern are following in the footsteps of the devil who sinned from the beginning. All those who say they are Christians are to be convicted in their heart by the Holy Spirit and to turn from sinning against our Lord. And it is with the Holy Spirits help that we can love.

v.11-13. The message of the Lord to His disciples from the beginning of His ministry was to love others and not be like Cain who killed Abel his brother. Cain refused to bring a lamb to sacrifice to the Lord. He was a religious man without true faith, and his works and his life were evil. The world will often hate a believer because his life shows up the evil practices of the of the world.

v.14-15. God's love in our hearts is amazing because we are able to love all fellow believers, even some who may be difficult. By this we know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. Believers cannot allow hate in their hearts, for to hate is to have murder in the heart.

Allowing love to work in our hearts

v.16-17. We can only know love by the example of the Lord who laid down His life for us. We also should live sacrificially for all of God's children, and this means laying down our lives in serving them. If God's love is in our hearts, we should not shut up our hearts, but give of our goods as able to help those in need.

v.18-19. We are not to love only with our words but also with our actions, by helping our brothers and sisters in practical ways. When we do this out of love for our Lord and the believers, we will know we are of the truth, loving as Jesus taught, then our hearts will not condemn but assure us.

v.20-21. Because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, we feel condemned in our hearts when we fail to love or care for others as we should. When our hearts are at peace and confident, we know that all is well in our relationship with our Lord.

Chapter 4

The spirit of evil that marks false prophets.

1 John 4:1-6. How can we try or test the spirits to know what is of God or what is of the devil? We must apply the word of God to their claims, for the word will reveal error. This is the way of knowing truth and demonic error:

False prophets deny the Father and the Son (1 John 2:23), and this is the basis of where all cultic religious lie. They deny the Father by denying the Son (Matthew 11:27; John 14:9-11). They deny the Son, His humanity and that by incarnation the Holy Spirit causing Mary to conceive. They deny His sinless manhood, His death and bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. They deny Christ as the Messiah, the Anointed One, God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

But believers possess both the Father and the Son and have the Holy Spirit within to reveal truth, ‘Christ in you the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).

His ‘little children’ are to be marked out by love

v. 7-11. These verses are easy to understand and need little explanation. *‘For God is love’*, and this is the hallmark of heaven. Nothing that is foreign to this love will enter its gates, for this divine love is from God and is of God. This love comes to us through the new birth. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and He enables us to love one another and all who are born of the Spirit. Those who do not love do not know God. This love is incredible, for God loved us before we loved Him, and sent His Son to be **the propitiation** for our sins. This means a *“Satisfaction made for sin through a sacrifice.”* This is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

v. 12-16. No one has seen God and lived. God hid Moses in cleft in a rock, and covered him with His hand while His glory passed by (Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-9). We have His Spirit within who reveals to us His Son. We confess this and have known and believed and this gives us assurance that we are His.

v.17-21. If we who believe practise this love to one another we will have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world, for we are safe in His eternal arms. Fear of things present or future can torment or trouble us. His love casts out all fear in living or in dying. If we fear, His love has not been perfected in us. The reason we can really love is because He first loved us and we cannot hate any brother or sister in the Lord. And so to love one another is a command from God, for if we love God we must love our brother.

Chapter 5

The necessity of faith

v. 1-3. When we believe and receive Christ as Saviour we are born of God (John 1:11-13). Then we will love those who also are begotten or born of Him. Those born of God will love God and His children and also will keep His commandments (John 13:34-35; 14:15). Keeping them should be a delight, not a burden. His commandment is *‘that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment’* (1 John 3:23).

v. 4-5. The world system is temporary and sensual. It has a strong attraction to us (1 John 2:15). This attraction can be broken because we are ‘born of God’ and because of *‘our faith’*. Faith is simply believing Him and His word, for now we can see things as they really are in this world and also in the one to come. Faith gives the victory, for we can only overcome the world by believing that Jesus is the Son of God (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The Divine Witnesses refuting the Gnostic error about Jesus Christ

v. 6-8. The Lord Jesus Christ **came by water**: He **came** from the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). The eternal Son of God came into public view at His baptism in water, and the Father and the Holy Spirit of truth gave witness. He also came by **blood**: This ended His public ministry when His blood was shed on the cross.

The Holy Spirit bore witness to His uniqueness: at His conception (Luke 1:35), at His baptism (Matthew 3:16), at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4:1), at His death on the cross (Hebrews 9:14) and to His resurrection (Romans 1:4).

These are all continuing witnesses to these Divine Truths:

1. The witness in Heaven: The Father who foreordained Him (1 Peter 1:20). **The Word** revealed Him in many Old Testament prophesies (Isaiah Chapter 53). **The Holy Spirit** would be upon Him (Isaiah 11:2). These three are one and are in agreement to all that is revealed.

2. There is a continual and ongoing witness on Earth: The Spirit who testifies to Christ (John 15:26). **The water** of His baptism (Matthew 3:16-17) when John also saw and testified that *‘this is the Son of God’* (John 1:19-34). **The Blood** He shed on the cross bears witness (Ephesians 1:7). These three agree in their witness to the Person and work of Christ

3. v. 9-13. There is a further witness: The witness of God, for if we receive the witness of men, why not God’s greater witness to His Son? **The inner witness**, within those who believe. Those who do not believe make God a liar in His witness

to His Son and this is a terrible sin. **God's final witness**, He gives us eternal life and this life is in His Son. John wrote so that we might know that we have eternal life in the Son of God and to be aware that not having the Son is eternal loss, and that we continue believing.

v.14-15. We can have the assurance that our prayers will be answered if we ask according to His will. We learn God's will by studying the Bible. God's will is found in God's word and by meditating and waiting on Him in prayer.

v.16-17. There are degrees of sin. We can pray for sinning believers, but some sins lead to death and our prayers are not then answered (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Some involve in sinful activities and will not repent. This would be especially true of those *'who went out from us'*, those who are professors but not possessors of eternal life (John 2:19; Hebrews Chapter 6).

Great certainties of the faith

v.18. Those born of God do not practice sinning. By walking in the new nature, true believers are kept and delivered from the wicked one (1 John 3:4-10).

v.19. We are of God, but the whole world lies under Satan's sway. **All people are either saved or lost!**

v.20. We know that the Son of God has come, and we who have believed know Him and are in Him, and this is eternal life!

v.21. We are to keep ourselves from idols. This is any teaching that leads away from the true God and are a substitute for the true. And so John closes his letter.

An idol is anything that we put before God in our lives. We are to keep ourselves from doing this.

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Study 7

Who is the Perfect Man?

How can a Christian live in triumph when facing the world, the flesh and the devil?

Christians know that there is only one Perfect Man, the Man Christ Jesus. The word of God says: *"For He made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). This teaches us that Christians can possess His perfect righteousness.

1. There is a perfection given to us called 'Positional Righteousness'.

The moment we believed, all sins, past, present and future are forgiven. Paul wrote: *"Him (Christ) we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus"* (Colossians 1:28). The word of God says, *"He made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Eph. 1:6).

2. There is a progress to maturity called 'Practical Righteousness'.

Jesus said to His listeners: *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:48). James wrote: *"If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body"* (James 3:2). We must ask then, what is this 'perfect man'?

What does 'perfect' mean?

It is not 'Sinless Perfection'. The Greek word translated as 'perfect' is 'teleous' and it means to be **'mature'**. It also means to have reached **'the desired end, finished or complete'**. James wrote: *"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end (teleous) intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful"* (James 5:1). Job demonstrated this 'maturity' when he prayed for his friends.

Arriving at 'Maturity'

God disciplines His people so that they reach His desired end for them (read Hebrews 12:1-17). It is a sad fact that true believers do sin, and then feel very unhappy because the Holy Spirit is grieved in their hearts. Some sin terribly like King David, in his case committing adultery and adding murder. David suffered under conviction (Psalm 32). His repentance and confession are found in Psalm 51.

Here are the steps that I believe God uses to help us reach this maturity.

1. First forgive yourself. To do this **accept** God's forgiveness. Read 1 John chapter 1. Do not wallow in **despondency** or in **self-pity**. Confess and forsake that sin, then stand up and move on with your life and service for the Lord.

2. Then forgive all who have sinned against you. If you harbour an unforgiving spirit, it will only hurt you, and limit your spiritual growth. Do not expect others to apologize to you, so stop going over the history of all the hurts.

3. Practice loving your neighbour as yourself. This means loving all fellow believers, and all who cross your path. Some people are easy to love. Ask the Lord to help you love the unlovely and those who are non-believers.

4. Make it a rule to stop all criticism of others. If you do not have a kind word to say, say nothing. If a brother or sister has sinned, go to them alone and seek reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-20). Do not become a **talebearer**. *"A talebearer*

reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Proverbs 11:13). Read Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 18:8; 20:19; 26:20 26:22.

5. Learn to have a positive faith. Meditate on things that are good (Philippians 4:8) and have a smile on your face. You are a child of the King! Believers are to reflect His image. Some Christians look sad, carrying a load of worry. Cast all your cares upon the Lord. **6.**

6. Meditate on His promises, and look up! Tell Him of all the blessings He has poured out upon you. Look for the coming of our Lord. We will not achieve perfection, but keep aiming for it!

Paul left us an example to follow in practical maturity.

Paul said, “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:12-14).

There is no such thing as ‘sinless perfection’ while we live in these human bodies, “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever” Amen. 2 Peter 3:18.

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The Lord’s Prayer

‘Your Kingdom Come’ A Study on Matthew 6:9-13.

Lord, teach us to pray: “*Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*”. Note this:

1. **‘Our Father’. A Relationship!** We have an intimate relationship, but one that means ‘I will obey’. From the Greek ‘Pater’ and the Hebrew ‘Abba’. ‘A child to our dear Father’. We are now the children of God. His little ‘born ones’. His children through faith in His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 3:1-3). “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

In this relationship we are sons of God, through the Spirit of adoption. “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of*

adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:14-17).

2. **‘Hallowed be Your name’. Reverent!** This demands respect and awe and reverence for His presence as we meet to worship Him, **a holy God to be feared.** This fear is not a slavish fear, but reverential awe and trust, for the only fear we should have is the fear of displeasing Him! In His temple, Seraphim cry, ‘*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty*’ (Isaiah 6:1-3).

We should have reverence when we enter His presence. “*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*”. (Philippians 2:9-11)

3. **‘Your kingdom come’. ‘Recognition’!** Believers now realise that one day His kingdom will indeed come, when He will rule in perfect righteousness. This is the last prayer in the Bible, “*He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” (Revelation 22:20).

4. **‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’. ‘Willing obedience’!** Believers now desire to do His will and in His kingdom all peoples will. For in a coming day, “*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*” (Rev. 11:15)

5. **‘Give us this day our daily bread’. ‘Reliance’!** He has promised to meet all our ‘needs’, but not our ‘wants’. He feeds even the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26). “*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19).

6. **‘And forgive us our debts’. ‘Repentance’,** forgiveness all of their lives, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*” (1 John 1:8-10).

7. **‘As we forgive our debtors’. ‘Offenses’!** Debtors are those who offend us, and Christians must maintain fellowship with one another, for this is the command Jesus gave to His disciples, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:34-35).

8. **‘And do not lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’.** **Restoration!** We are prone to be tempted by our sinful natures, so we need to cry to Him for help. “*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God*

cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (James 1:13-14).

9. His Kingdom is coming! “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen”. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7). A glorious day!

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We can know that God is in control

One of my Students asked me this question: “Does everything that happens to us always have a reason or is it always God's plan”

The Bible clearly teaches us that God does have a plan for a believers life.

God’s word says this: *‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them’* (Read Ephesians 2:8-10). We must walk with Him if we are to fulfil this plan. Sometimes we do things that are not pleasing to Him, The secret is this *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:1-2).

We are bought with a price with the precious blood of Christ shed on the Cross. He wants us to prayerfully meditate on His word, and as we trust Him and wait upon Him and ask Him what His will is for our lives, He will in His time lead us in into His way and open doors of opportunity to serve Him. *‘Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass’* (Psalm 37:5). *‘Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses’* (Psalm 25:12). *‘The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way’* (Psalm 25:9).

Satan is our Adversary, and he desired to have Peter and he denied his Lord three times (Luke 22:31-34). Peter had to learn his own weaknesses. Satan also troubled Job, and he was a good man. After all these trials, Peter and Job were better men and learnt important lessons. God chastens those He loves.

Trials and testings will come and these do not mean we are out of His will. It is through trials that He develops our Christin character, but He will limit the trial: *‘No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the*

temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it’ (1 Cor 10:13 NKJV). God’s word also tells us this: *‘And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose’* (Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

Just keep trusting the Lord, and daily commit your way to Him as you seek to obey His word. Let us not become weary as we run the Christian race, for we have the perfect provision in all this, the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:11-16; Chapter 12).

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

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