

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

As I observe the suffering and economic chaos that engulfs so much of the world my mind is directed to the words of the apostle James, “Draw near to God” (James 4:8). In their desire to find help and healing people try many programs, go all over the country and even travel the world, attend endless seminars, workshops, retreats, visit holy shrines, or spend large amounts of money on Internet self-help programs and still fail

to get the help they need that sustains them over the long term. I believe that only fellowship with the Living God will satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart and that until we find this we shall be “seeking but never finding” (see Amos 8:11-12). God *is* our Life; if we fail to put at top priority connecting with that Life we are choosing death in all of its many forms. My desire is that all people would come to know our wonderful God and experience fellowship with Him everyday.

If you wish to be on my email list to receive a notice when a new **GEMS OF TRUTH** is available or send some comments contact me as below:

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JESUS SAVIOR PILOT ME

**Ecclesiastes 7:20
Common English Bible
(CEB)**

20 Remember: there's no one on earth so righteous as to do good only and never make a mistake.

**1 John 1:8 The Message
(MSG)**

8 If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense.



We are all imperfect human beings in ourselves and always will be in this present life. Our very best efforts to love God and our fellow men fall short of perfection and so we always need the righteousness of Christ which gives us a perfect standing before God. Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, lived a perfect life in our behalf and His life stands for our life when we accept Him. Heaven and earth were united in Him. We have a complete Savior who is both our righteousness and our helper in every time of need (see 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 7:25). The simple message of Jesus as Savior and about His great love for each of us always brings great joy to my heart. I love that old hymn that we used to sing many years ago, "Jesus Savior pilot me over life's tempestuous sea." Isn't it wonderful to have a Savior to guide us through the complexities and perplexities of everyday life and know that He is in charge of all things and ultimately His purposes will be accomplished.

Because we are imperfect and need a Savior we extend compassion rather than harsh judgment towards other erring people. Those who appreciate God's forgiveness will forgive much. As we remember our constant need of both God's forgiving and enabling grace we are humbled and this leads us to seek God's help more and more everyday as we endeavor to live for Him.

THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

Colossians 1:16 Common English Bible (CEB)

**Because all things were created by him:
both in the heavens and on the earth,
the things that are visible and the things that are invisible.**

**Whether they are thrones or powers,
or rulers or authorities,
all things were created through him and for him.**

In Col 1:16 "visible and invisible" would refer to God's *true* creation which is wholly spiritual and not composed of matter as we know it. Spiritual creation is God's creation; His creation is not evil. Evil didn't originate in God. Duality comes from

eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which is continually going on among mortals. Our spiritual vision has become obscured and we have fallen asleep so we are not seeing the *true* creation but the carnal mind's version of it which is what is visible to us with the limitations of the five physical senses. Who is to say that everything spiritual also must be invisible? Did you ever think about that? I believe that God's *true* creation is invisible to carnal vision but as we grow spiritually we begin to see God's spiritual creation everywhere and the time will come in our eternal growth process when we will see God's true creation as it really is (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ;13:12). I pray all the time that when I look at people I will see God's image and likeness in them and look past the carnal mind's false version of who they are. In looking at the beauties of nature I will start to see the spiritual qualities that they reflect more than the physical form which is always subject to decay and change.



THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO



Luke 23:34 Amplified Bible (AMP)

34 And Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

We would all think that crucifying the Son of God would be the unpardonable sin, especially for the Jewish leaders and the people who blindly followed them. For centuries God had revealed Himself again and again to His people that He had chosen to represent Him to the world. Instead of following God's plan Israel chose the path of apostasy and rebellion. Finally God sent His Son Who fully revealed in human flesh what God was

like. Again, the chosen people defiantly rejected God's provision and ended up crying, "We have no king but Caesar; Crucify Him." Yet Jesus prayed in His dying moments, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." I find these words totally amazing when I really stop to think about their implications.

What spoke especially to my heart was that often I'm tempted to judge someone for their behavior with the thought, "They should know better than that." From a human standpoint this may be true but there is something going on here that is beyond human reason. I'm called to forgive those who indeed should know better than to do whatever it is that I'm judging as wrong. It seems to me that the words "they know not what they do" imply a huge area of ignorance that governs much unloving and harmful human behavior. What works best for me is to avoid overworking my mind trying to figure out why anyone does anything but to recognize that there is an element of mystery here that not even the greatest experts in behavioral sciences are able to understand. In the OT system there were specific sacrifices for sins of ignorance. Because of this element of ignorance forgiveness of ourselves and others is always necessary and at the same time challenges the best of us. In the end I must simply choose to forgive whether I feel like it or not or understand it all or not. Only God can read the heart and He has asked that I forgive all, even the worst of sinners. In my own strength I find it difficult to do this but when I depend upon God all things are possible. I give thanks more than any words could ever express for the power of God which is freely given to us in every time of need. We are not left to struggle alone.

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”--C S Lewis

DEAD TO LEGALISM BUT ALIVE TO GOD

Galatians 2:19 New King James Version (NKJV)

19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

Before his conversion Paul had been one of the strictest observers of the law (the Jewish religion). Through this very practice of trying to be righteous by the law he finally "died to the law" when he realized the futility of such a life. He

learned that Jesus was indeed the Savior of all and found that righteousness which is solely by faith. He now discovered a peace that surpassed all understanding and learned the emptiness of a legalistic religion.

There are many people who, like Paul, are reared in some religion and may spend many years trying to keep all of the rules and regulations that are required but never find much love, joy, or peace. In their frustration they may turn away from God for a time. I've met many such folks over the years. Our Savior has compassion on all and is drawing them to Himself (see John 12:32). Each of us has a responsibility to exemplify God's love in such a winsome way that our lives will help others find the path of eternal life. Those who've become disillusioned with the faith journey because of legalistic religion don't need someone preaching in their face but they need to see God's love being practiced. We are all privileged to be a vessel through which the love of God flows out to bless others.



THE JUSTICE OF GOD



Galatians 6:7-8 New Living Translation (NLT)

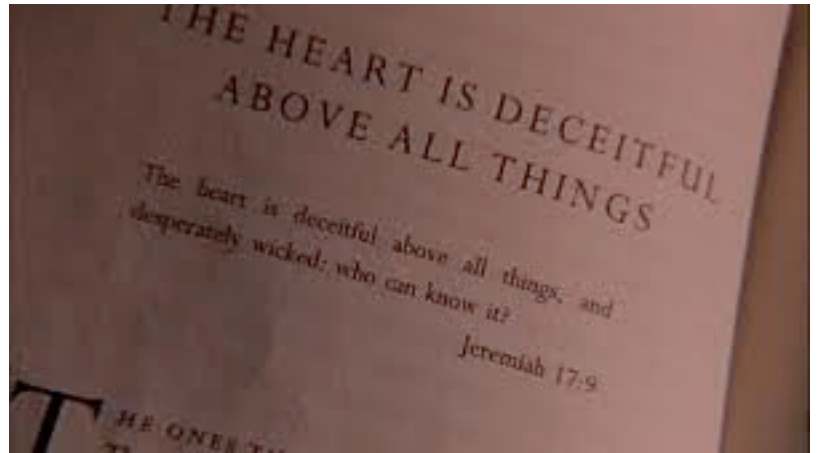
7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

There has been a mad stampede away from the clear biblical teaching on the justice of God. This topic has several facets but one of the most essential ones is that God's justice is manifested by giving us the freedom to make choices that bring either a "harvest of decay and death" or a "harvest of everlasting life from the Spirit." The "harvest of decay and death" is intended to be corrective rather than punitive. Human justice as rendered by the courts is focused on punishment and little or nothing is done towards restoration and healing. In God's plan of justice the intention is that the wrongdoer will be restored to living in love instead of selfishness. Unloving behavior carries within itself the seeds of its own punishment and destruction. God is love and anything that we do that is ungodly (unloving) will bring suffering; there is *no* escaping this. I believe that the suffering will be in direct proportion to the level of self-centeredness. Hopefully the time will come when the transgressor will turn fully to God and live in the sunshine of His wonderful love and thus experience "everlasting life from the Spirit." We need ever keep in mind that wrong doing in any form brings suffering; we "cannot mock the justice of God." Living for God instead of living in self-centeredness is a wonderful plan.

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?

Jeremiah 17:9 English Standard Version (ESV)

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?



In today's popular spirituality there is a very strong tendency to down play or totally overlook the potential for evil that lurks in the heart of every person without any exception. However, one only has to read or listen to any news cast and the "desperately sick" aspect of human nature stands out loud and clear. The part that is important to remember is, "Who can understand it?" There is NO logical or human explanation for the insanity of so much that goes on and the best experts in behavioral sciences cannot understand it either. The Biblical and Christian explanation of "sin" makes the most sense to me and since this is called "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7) I don't feel badly that I can't understand it all. Human will power, self-help programs, good philosophies, and advanced education aren't adequate to stop the tide of iniquity that still engulfs much of the world. Highly educated people, even those with PhD degrees in Theology or Psychology, sometimes do some absolutely stupid things and may even commit heinous crimes. I believe that *the power of God* is something that is being ignored to a large extent amidst all of the myriads of popular teachings that are flooding the world like the frogs of Egypt. People are looking to many modern gurus who often get large followings and lots of money as they sell their wares to the gullible masses. The money that people spend in traveling all over the place going from one retreat to another or seeking out some great spiritual teacher could be saved and that same time more profitably spent in the Word of God and waiting upon God in prayer. This would bring needed wisdom and power. *Prayer and feeding on God's Word connect us with the Source of all power.* This is simply my honest conviction after spending 60+ years of following that path. I honor whatever other ways people may find to get needed help.

For me the bottom line of it all is that I must continually "watch and pray" in order to be safe from this "desperately sick" part of my human nature. I can't look to man or to programs to find my strength, although I may learn useful concepts from many

sources. I must abide in the secret place of the most high God continually (see Psalm 91).

COMING HOME



Psalm 119:105 Common English Bible (CEB)

105 Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.

Some say that the Bible is the Word of God. My confession of faith would be something like this, "I find the Word of God *in* the Bible that speaks to my heart in a way that nothing else ever has." I truly give thanks for the grace of God in

providing such a resource that has withstood all of the attacks that skeptics and critics have heaped upon it over the centuries. French philosopher Voltaire (1700s) and Robert Ingersoll, an American politician and famous orator (1800s), both boasted that the Bible would go out of existence. Ingersoll traveled all over the country speaking against the Bible and religious belief. He was nicknamed "The Great Agnostic." He is purported to have said that he would put the Bible out of business. Most people today know little of these men but the Bible is more in demand than ever before because it still meets the deepest needs of human beings. I'm very thankful that godly, qualified Bible scholars have shared their expertise to make available the finest translations ever in history. No translation is perfect but we can find a Word from God in all of them.

The intention of our heart to fellowship with God is what will lead us Home. My concept of "coming Home" is the discovery of the wonderful Kingdom of God which is both within and all around us. This is indeed the land of milk and honey which consists of love, joy, and peace that passes all understanding. The Holy Spirit is given to all who are hungry for more than this old world of materialism could ever offer and will guide each earnest seeker to the Promised Land. Those who are half-hearted in their search for truth will get little results. We must seek God and His kingdom with all of our heart, mind, and soul (see Matthew 13:44).

In researching on Bible Gateway I came up with the following results in searching for the words in quotes. That is why I keep emphasizing the Bible as much as I do. "Coming home" is for me a daily experience.

"word of God" 48 times

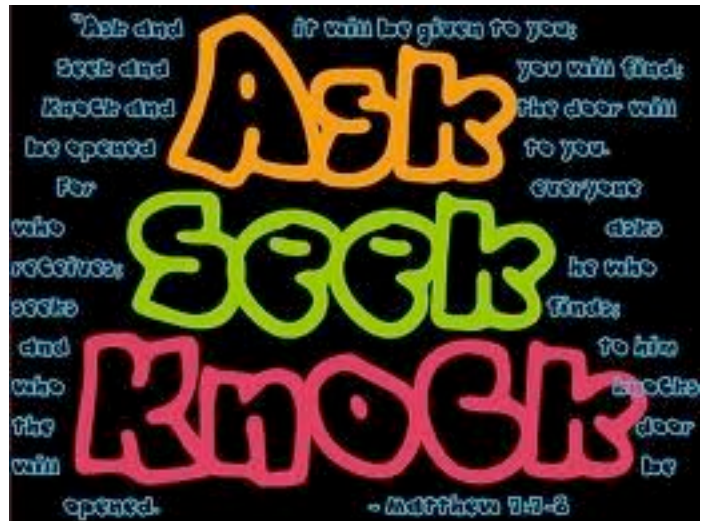
"word of the Lord" 255 times

"thus says the Lord" 418 times

TWISTING THE SCRIPTURES

2 Peter 3:15-16 Common English Bible (CEB)

15 Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, 16 speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.



The greatest enemies of the Scriptures are not those who directly attack them but those who claim to believe but twist and misuse them in so many ways. Scripture twisting leads to spiritual destruction. Often those who misuse Scripture do it in a way that appears very righteous and pious and such misuse frequently involves issues of judgment or trying to control and "fix" others. The wonders of God and His power are ministered to those who approach the Bible with a hunger for Him and a desire to love others more. The way of God is very simple. Sometimes those who are highly educated find it difficult to understand this. When I find something hard to understand I pray about it and seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and insights come which are very precious. Some of you have shared with me in response to what I've been sharing recently that you also do the same thing. It is encouraging to know that in spite of all the twisting and misuse of the Bible that millions are still finding their way to new life, peace, joy, and love as they read and seek God's guidance. Also I'm thankful that there are a lot of good books and Bible study aids available today that help us find

some of the treasures in the Scriptures that can be enriching in our spiritual journey. If we sincerely pray for guidance we'll find just what will help us the most at any given time. "Seek and you will find" were the words that Jesus used and which apply to all of us.

YOUR FIRST LOVE



Revelation 2:4-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

It is so easy to lose our "first love" for God--just a little at a time. There are many things that capture our attention in a very subtle way and cause us to neglect quality time for communion with God. The danger here is that our "lampstand" may be removed without our even realizing what is

happening. Our spiritual power becomes weakened and we end up just going through the motions of religious forms or clinging to certain beliefs. Life becomes gradually meaningless and empty and when challenges arise we are unprepared. We may feel very self-righteous--better than "those unbelievers" all around who show little or no interest in God. The church at Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans who had heretical beliefs and followed licentious lifestyles. The believers took great pride in not being wicked like the Nicolaitans but had actually "lost it all" and seemed very unaware of it. It is urgent that all of us carefully examine our hearts daily and turn wholly to the Savior and give communion with Him the absolute highest priority above everything else. I've found it necessary many times to pray something like this, "Lord, renew my first love for You. I need your help as I can't stay on the path of my love for You without Your help all the time."

I have many helpful spiritual books on my shelf but am finding more than ever of late how important it is that I often turn to the Scriptures themselves, read, ponder, and sometimes specifically pray over the precious words that I find. I need to discover God's Word for me everyday.

THE POWER OF THE LORD

**Luke 5:17 Common English Bible
(CEB)**

14 One day when Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and legal experts were sitting nearby. They had come from every village in Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem. Now the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal.

**Luke 6:19 New Living Translation
(NLT)**

19 Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.

Jesus lived in unbroken communion with and dependence upon His Father. He was continually filled with the power of love and *this love power went forth from Him and healed those who were receptive*. He did not have to beg, plead, or use any human schemes. In the Book of Acts the same thing happened with the apostles who were truly Spirit filled. People were healed merely by passing through their shadow. My desire is to live in such close communion with God that I can be a vessel through which His healing power can flow and bless many. This would include those who may be a long distance away and that I may know nothing about. Could not someone who is reaching out for help anywhere in the world be touched by my prayers as well as the prayers of many others? Millions of people don't even know where to begin in praying for themselves. The thought of a wider outreach in prayer should encourage us to spend more time than ever in waiting upon God. God is present everywhere and I see communion with Him as the way we "plug into" that Infinite power the same way that my electrical appliances won't work unless I plug them into their receptacles that supply the power so that they can do what they're supposed to do.



THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU



Exodus 14:13-14

New King James Version (NKJV)

13 And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. 14

The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

The Israelites were faced with the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian hosts behind them. What a predicament! They were told to, "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" and "you shall hold your peace." God opened the way and they crossed the Red Sea in God's own way which was a total surprise to them. There are so many times for all of us when it appears that we face a personal challenge that seems insurmountable or we may feel totally helpless to help someone we love who is suffering or perhaps making unwise decisions. I've had so many of these times in my own life when it just seemed like all of my options had run out and in desperation I've turned it all over to God. I've had to confess my utter helplessness and go to the Bible to find help and there it was. So many times I've found the very help that I needed in the Psalms which cover all of the contingencies of human need as well as dealing with human emotions both positive and negative. So if you are in a situation where you feel helpless and even hopeless take courage. Go to the Psalms seeking for an answer. Surrender it all to God. Your help is on the way. "The Lord will fight for you." You are not left alone.

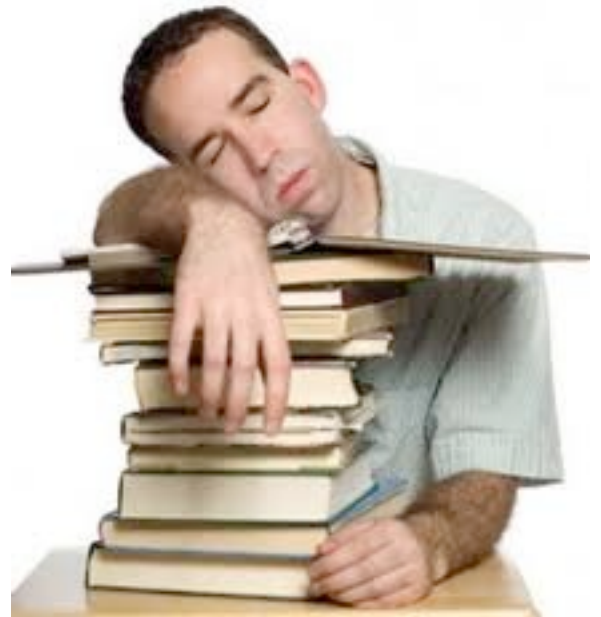
MAKING MANY BOOKS

Ecclesiastes 12:12 Amplified Bible (AMP)

12 But about going further [than the words given by one Shepherd], my son, be warned. Of making many books there is no end [so do not believe everything you read], and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Just think! When these wise words were written the common folks were mostly illiterate and had no access to any books like we have today. There were only a few scrolls and fragments of parchments available. This counsel is very prophetic of our modern generation which is encumbered seriously with "information overload."

I'm convinced that the enemy of souls is very successfully depleting millions of their joy and spiritual power by the flood of not only books and magazines but even more so with TV and Internet which hypnotize the minds of the unthinking masses. There is such a flood of information *about* the Bible that few actually read and ponder the sacred pages so as to make room in their hearts for a personal walk with God. The reason I cherish the **THOMPSON CHAIN REFERENCE BIBLE** above all other study Bibles is that it *leads you to the Bible itself and to its depth*. We all have to decide everyday if walking with God is the number one priority or if we prefer other "gods." Anything that occupies more of our attention than the pursuit of God is indeed another "god."



THE LITTLE FOXES



Song of Solomon 2:15 New King James Version (NKJV)

**15 Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil the vines,
For our vines *have* tender grapes.**

It is "the little foxes" for the most part rather than some really big issue that most likely will

siphon off our first love for God and bring suffering. Even the smallest irritations and thoughts of judgment of others are forms of death and these escape our notice most of the time because on the surface they may appear harmless but they are *like a deadly poison--wolves in sheep's clothing*. Jesus clearly taught this principle in the Sermon on the Mount when He pointed out that such things as murder and adultery were based in the realm of the thoughts, not in the overt act. To judge others by some outward appearance, to allow ourselves to be irritated *even in the slightest degree*, to neglect daily communion with God, or to talk about negative things are just a few of "the little foxes" that damage our spiritual journey the most. Think about this and when these "little foxes" start to eat away your walk with God immediately turn to Him and ask for His help to expel them. *Don't tolerate them even for a moment*. This takes constant vigilance but is more than worth the effort. The best way to overcome the temptation to dwell on and express the negative is to be proactive and follow what Paul clearly teaches in Philippians 4:8.

LIFE THREATENING?

Romans 8:38-39 Common English Bible (CEB)

38-39 I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

Colossians 3:3-4 New Living

Translation (NLT)

3 For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

The phrase "life threatening" is very popular and appeals to the latent fear of death that is in all people. However, for those who choose to believe, "your real life is hidden with Christ in God." The word "real" means that which God has created and which no man can touch. Such being the case is there such a thing as something that is *really* "life threatening"? Can sickness, death, and accidents "threaten" that life which "is hidden with Christ in God"? If we are really free of this fear of death then how many other fears do we need to entertain? Are not the commands "be not afraid" or "fear not"



found over and over again in the Scriptures? How much do we really believe them when we are faced with a serious challenge that some call "life threatening"? We would be so much better off if we would be simply *willing* to release all of the fear and completely trust in the promises of God. He will carry us under His wings at all times and circumstances and when our time comes to pass from this present life to the other side He will take us to the very dwelling place that is best for us (see John 14:1-3).

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN CHRIST



Ephesians 1:3 Common English Bible (CEB)

3 Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven.

For many years this verse has been one of my spiritual anchor points. Our Father "has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing." These blessings come "from heaven"--not from some earthly source that we have to spend a lot of money or do something complicated to find. The main thing that spoke to my heart when I first heard teachings on this verse many years ago is that we already *have* every blessing that we will ever need for time and eternity through our union with Christ. We don't have to ask for a lot of separate blessings for "in Christ" we have them all. So what makes sense to me is to cultivate a close walk with Him everyday and then whatever specific blessing or form of help that I need at any given time will be provided in the most appropriate way. I think if we would recognize the utter simplicity of fellowship with the Savior instead of asking for so many *things* that we think we need we would indeed begin to experience more of "every spiritual blessing" than we could ever begin to imagine. We also have a tendency to make the spiritual journey complicated when actually it is very simple. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal this simple path to us.

**Contact the Editor
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