

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

The spiritual life is indeed a journey and there is no point when we will be able to say “I have arrived.” There will always be tests, trials, and challenges to work through. We are ever dependent upon both God’s forgiving and enabling grace to carry us through. We need God’s forgiving grace because nothing we do is perfect. In many things we fall short. “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does

good and never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20 ESV). So even our good deeds are not perfect even though we do the best we can. Jesus is always by our side and imparts to us His enabling grace and through His power we can do all things (see Philippians 4:13). Let us give thanks for the hope that we have in our Christian life and always keep going forward and upward and do everything we can to uplift others along the way.

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FULFILLMENT AND HUNGER

Psalm 16:11 Amplified Bible (AMP)

11 You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 84:2 Common English Bible (CEB)

**2 My very being longs, even yearns, for the Lord's courtyards.
My heart and my body will rejoice out loud to the living God!**

Revelation 3:20-21 The Message (MSG)



20-21 "Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you. Conquerors will sit alongside me at the head table, just as I, having conquered, took the place of honor at the side of my Father. That's my gift to the conquerors!"

A profound truth is that as we experience more of God in our lives, the greater is our fulfillment, and at the same time, the greater our hunger for more of His Presence. The two go hand in hand. Give that some thought. Our Father's House is a dwelling place of infinite love, joy, and peace and we'll continue to explore His House and experience more of Him throughout eternity. We have so many "great and precious promises" in His Word of the close fellowship we may have everyday with our Lord (see 2 Peter 1:4). *Heaven begins right here and now.* As we die to the old ego self which keeps us in bondage, we are set free to serve our Lord more fully. This is a growing process. Believers have a wonderful hope that carries us in peace through this present life and into the next. The enemy of all good is constantly trying to weaken this hope or take it away from us totally. That is why we can never relax our diligence but must keep earnestly pursuing the things of God (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 5:8).



THE ULTIMATE ENERGY SOURCE

Isaiah 40:31 Amplified Bible (AMP)

31 But those who wait for the Lord [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount up to the sun]; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and

not faint or become tired.

We hear a lot about energy these days and often popular buzz words like "renewable energy." Pills, potions, and programs abound that guarantee to give you energy, cure your depression, raise your level of consciousness and give you a sense of well-being. I believe that the verse quoted above provides the ultimate answer to finding true and lasting energy and could be summarized in the words "communion with God" on a regular, consistent basis. To "wait for the Lord" truly involves a lot of time and patience and is really a way of life and not just something done here and there. This patient waiting will open up heavenly realms of consciousness that we've never dreamed of

and many things that once seemed so very important no longer will be so. We shall receive renewal of strength and energy in a way that nothing in the materialistic world could ever do. More information is available today about religion and spirituality than ever before but few experience a true revelation of God on a heart level. There is a great danger of depending too much upon human resources instead of upon the Living God (see Isaiah 30:2 and Jeremiah 17:5) We shall be given wisdom and guidance as we open our hearts to learn what it means to commune with God and to wait upon Him--"expect, look for, and hope in Him."

THE ENERGY OF LETTING GO

Romans 2:1-3 Common English Bible (CEB)

1 So every single one of you who judge others is without any excuse. You condemn yourself when you judge another person because the one who is judging is doing the same things. 2 We know that God's judgment agrees with the truth, and his judgment is against those who do these kinds of things. 3 If you judge those who do these kinds of things while you do the same things yourself, think about this: Do you believe that you will escape God's judgment?



There is great energy [power, freedom, strength] to be experienced as we learn to let go of trying to correct, control, or judge others. Judging is merely another form of control. Give that some thought the next time you are tempted to judge someone. If we are even entertaining private thoughts of judgment and control people will sense this and a wall will be created. The reason letting go of all control issues is so "energizing" is because it takes the unbearable burden from our shoulders of thinking that we must always "fix" others. We learn to peacefully let go and allow others to make mistakes and learn their own lessons. This doesn't mean that we don't care about the person and that we necessarily approve of their behavior nor does it mean that we have to be close to those who choose destructive behaviors that are not good for us. In some cases we must distance ourselves for our own protection and perhaps doing this will help the other person learn that their behavior is affecting others adversely. Each situation is different and we need God's wisdom constantly to know what is best (see James 1:5). My essential point here is that the motivation on our part to control others is what we need to carefully monitor and we need to be honest with ourselves about this. Do we always have to be so forthright in giving advice or stating our opinion when many times the other person would rather that we listen

to *their* concerns and life stories? Honest heart searching and surrender to God are necessary at every step as we learn how to relate to others in ways that will be beneficial. That old ego ["that old devil and Satan"] is lurking and ready to spring into action at every opportunity. Probably a "self-righteous--know it all" ego is the most deceptive, destructive and hurtful to others above all other forms of ego-based behavior.

“I think most people try to get others to see through their eyes.”--Don Van Vliet



GIVE ME YOUR HEART

Proverbs 23:26 New Living Translation (NLT)

**26 O my son, give me your heart.
May your eyes take delight in following my ways.**

The Hebrew word translated as "heart" in English can have any of the following meanings and context should always be considered: the total personality of a person; the inner self -- what it means to be human – personality/inclination; intellect, rational thought (metaphorically “the brain” in English); memory; emotions; motives; desire; will; determination; courage. If we substituted some of these meanings for "heart" in the above quoted verse it would shed great clarity on the true meaning of what it means to give our "heart" to God. To the ancient Hebrews the heart was the mind including all thoughts and emotions. The Greek word translated "heart" in English has similar connotations. I found the word "heart" used 870+ times in English Bibles. This frequency of usage should tell us how important it is for us to be concerned with issues of the heart above all else. We must always think in terms of HEART issues and not be satisfied merely to settle down in intellectualism--the tree of knowledge (information). Now with the information superhighway of the Internet the temptation to do this is greater than ever before in history. It seems to me that genuine healing must begin with the heart and that healing of the body will follow when heart issues are healed (Proverbs 4:23). There are a LOT of mysteries about healing so I would not wish to be dogmatic about any aspects of it. I choose to surrender to the mysteries of life and trust God to make things clearer to me as I grow in His love and grace. God is

the only source of life and so healing (wholeness) is His work in our lives. I would not be able to explain the "how" of His workings even in my own life, let alone how He works with others. Even though my knowledge is very fragmentary it seems best for me to live in communion with Him and trust Him to accomplish His work in me in His own time and way (Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13).

THOSE WHO LOVE

1 John 4:7-8 New Living Translation (NLT)

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The true children of God come from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. They may be religious or of no religion at all. But what really marks them as God's true people? There is only ONE test that marks those who really know God and that is LOVE and love is not a belief of some kind but is totally EXPERIENTIAL. Those who manifest love for others in their daily lives are the children of God. Religious profession is very hollow if it isn't accompanied by love and good works. We all need to carefully examine our motivations everyday and make sure that we are living in love above every other consideration. This is a life long challenge but one well worth pursuing. The most important aspect of all to think about is THE POWER OF LOVE to heal and restore. I've read many books and articles on the topic of healing from both a biblical and scientific perspective and the common denominator of all healing is LOVE. This makes perfect sense. If GOD IS LOVE and He is the ONLY true power then to work with love experientially is to move in the power of God. Again, it all comes down to greater revelations of what love is all about and actually putting it into practice. God's love is a gift and so spending time in communion with Him is absolutely essential in order to be effective in bringing healing to the world (see Romans 5:5).





BE MY WITNESSES

Acts 1:8 Common English Bible (CEB)

8 Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Notice the clarity that our Lord used in telling His followers of their mission just before His ascension. He said "you will BE my witnesses." When we receive the power of the Holy Spirit we shall indeed BE FILLED with God's light which will continue to shine brighter and brighter not only to those that are close by (Jerusalem and Judea) but this light will penetrate throughout the whole earth (see Numbers 14:21; Habakkuk 2:14; Revelation 18:1). I would not dispute the fact that valuable seeds of truth are being sown through modern means of mass evangelism but the focus on such has been a poor substitute for what our Lord envisioned when He said "you will BE my witnesses." None of us can BE witnesses unless we are filled with God's light and power from within. This ONLY comes through quality time spent in communion with God. There is no other way. We would be much further advanced in our spiritual journey if the time spent imbibing electronic media and scattering ourselves in so many directions were spent in fellowship with God, listening to His Voice, and experiencing the reality of His presence. As we commune with God it is well to remember that we are not only experiencing His presence individually but we are at the same time bringing many others with us into that sacred place. Since we are all connected what blesses one blesses all.

BUILDING YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH

Jude 20-21 English Standard Version (ESV)

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God,



waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Our Christian faith is being challenged today probably more than ever before in history. As we face this we must realize that trying to retreat to old ways of thinking that have created many of our problems in the first place isn't the answer. The critics have made some very valid points and we need to pay attention and make needed corrections. Let us not wrap ourselves in robes of self-righteousness and think we are better than anyone else for we are all in need of God's grace every moment of every day. We continually fall short of what we could be, should be, and would be (see Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). It is only as we personally make sure that we are rooted and grounded in our "most holy faith" that we are prepared to respond to the general decline of simple faith and increasing violence that seems to be so prevalent in the world. Notice how closely that building our faith is connected to "praying in the Holy Spirit" and keeping ourselves "in the love of God." The "eternal life" that is mentioned here is not solely referring to some future life after death but means a "God-like" quality of life which is to be experienced here and now and continues throughout eternity. All of our communion with God through prayer and study must be "in the Holy Spirit" or it can degenerate into merely "going through the motions" without any power or real life. We can't be a light in the world unless we are continually anointed and energized by God's Spirit; to have this requires a conscious decision on our part to choose the best even above that which may be good in itself. There are so many desirable things to claim our time and attention, especially in this electronically driven world, that it requires a lot spiritual discernment to sort it all out. I invite you to join with me in this earnest work of building up our most holy faith in dependence upon God at every stage.

"A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for. You are made in the image of what you desire."-- Thomas Merton



FORGETTING THE PAST

Philippians 3:13 New Living Translation (NLT)

13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past

and looking forward to what lies ahead

There is something about letting go of the past and moving forward that seems very difficult for all of us. We tend to hang on to negative memories whether they be of a painful relationship, losing a job, an accident, an illness, or old beliefs that may be doing more harm than good. We are inclined to rehearse these things over and over again. Sometimes doing this may be a way of feeling right about ourselves, especially in a relationship issue. In other cases hanging on to these old memories may be a security blanket. We may feel more comfortable and secure in clinging to rather than letting go of the pain of making needed changes. Moving beyond old ways of thinking can be fearful indeed. Painful memories often show up in our dreams in various images and this can be very troubling. I'm finding that persistent healing prayer is the most help for distressing dreams. At times troubling dreams involving someone else have been transformed into loving ones and this is most wonderful indeed. Such experiences help me to realize God's love in a way that is very special. Old memories don't leave easily. We must make a total commitment to God and with Paul "focus on this one thing." The power of God is all sufficient and will meet all of our needs. The keys here are a *desire* and a *willingness* to let go of the past and to experience love, joy, and peace in the **NOW**. We need wisdom and discernment which are given to all who sincerely ask (see James 1:5). The power of God is greater and more permanent than any kind of human help or depending upon human will power (see John 15:4; Philippians 4:13).

“Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.” -C.S. Lewis

GOD'S PLANS FOR MY LIFE

Psalm 138:8 New Living Translation (NLT)

8 The Lord will work out his plans for my life—

for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever.

Don't abandon me, for you made me.



God will do whatever it takes to "work out His plans for my life." Many times He pours out His love to us in ways that are peaceful and too wonderful to ever find words to express. At other times He simply allows us to reap the consequences of foolish choices that we make. He never abandons us but we may abandon Him by simply

neglecting to commune with Him. The love of God is gentle and yet at the same time persistent and thorough. God's ultimate will is that we return to His house from which we have strayed in our consciousness. When we live in harmony with His will we avoid a lot of unnecessary suffering. In the Lord's prayer we say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We need to give more serious thought to the implications of these very simple, yet deeply profound words. One thought that comes to mind is, "Dear Lord, bring me into harmony with your perfect will for my life."



CAN THE DEAD LIVE AGAIN?

Job 14:14 New Living Translation (NLT)

14 Can the dead live again?

If so, this would give me hope through all my years of struggle, and I would eagerly await the release of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Common English Bible (CEB)

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he also shared the same things in the same way. He did this to destroy the one who holds the power over death—the devil—by dying. 15 He set free those who were held in slavery their entire lives by their fear of death.

"Can the dead live again?" I believe this question haunts everyone in the world at some point. The "fear of death" is behind a very high percentage of insane human behavior. This fear underlies nearly all of the obsessions and addictions that pertain to the human body. People quickly run after any new remedy or program whether it be mainstream medicine or alternative that they think will cure or prevent sickness, or bring them health, longer life, happiness, and a greater sense of well-being. I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the only clear and sure answer to the question, "Can the dead live again?" The redemption provided by Jesus--the last Adam--is complete and inclusive (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22). What a blessing it is to know this wonderful gospel message and experience its resurrection power in our lives here and now. We don't have to be in bondage to the fear of death which dominates most of the world. As believers we need have no fear of death whatsoever and have no need to be compulsive/obsessive about either the pains or pleasures of the physical body. I've followed a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and proper nutrition since my teenage years as that only makes good sense but I'm also increasingly aware that my real life is NOT in my body but in God and in God alone! The Spirit of God that

raised Jesus from the dead and which indwells all believers gives life to the mortal body (Romans 8:11). The implications of this truth have been given very little thought for the most part. There are many deep truths of God's Word to be revealed yet to earnest seekers (Jeremiah 29:12-14; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

LET GOD BE TRUE

Romans 3:1-4 English Standard Version (ESV)

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

“That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

The Jews were raised up of God to represent His principles before the whole world and make known the true God. Much of the history in the Old Testament is about how His chosen people utterly failed to accomplish their mission. Their decision to reject and crucify Messiah Jesus was the final step in their rejection as His called out nation. God had been infinitely patient with them. He has now called a new Israel, His church, to proclaim His gospel to the world and we have about 2000 years of church history to learn from. One could debate how effective the Christian church has been in fulfilling its mission. My opinion is that the church has always had its strengths and weaknesses which have simply mirrored the imperfections of its members. If everyone in the church were like me it would still be very imperfect, falling short of the glory of God. However, I believe that the church has been entrusted with the everlasting gospel [good news] to share with the world and that this purpose is being accomplished despite all of the human failures. The sins of the church do not mean that something is wrong with God or the gospel but with the human beings who profess to believe in it. I strongly support the principle "Let God be true though every one were a liar." If we spend a lot of time dwelling on the failures of various organizations or individuals we weaken ourselves and will suffer accordingly. Let us every strengthen



ourselves and others in the mighty power of God whose purposes will be ultimately fulfilled.



HUMBLE YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 8:2 New Living Translation (NLT)

2 Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much.

James 4:10 English Standard Version (ESV)

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Often Bible students who strongly believe they have the absolute truth on a given topic will expend a great deal of effort to prove how right they are. This is especially true of "end times" interpretations. The Bible does not set any dates or provide detailed information about future events (see Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:6-7). Books containing prophetic speculations have become best sellers. There is no form of ego more deceptive than "religious ego" which often comes as an angel of light and looks very pious (see 2 Corinthians 11:14). Regardless of what religious profession we make the basic issues of the human ego must be faced squarely and surrendered at the foot of the cross. Spiritual blindness will prevail until this is done. We must indeed humble ourselves before God everyday. True spiritual power comes with humility. Only the Holy Spirit can break down this pride of opinion and wall of self-righteousness that we put up around ourselves. Such victory will not happen without a genuine desire for help and deliverance. Indeed, this desire itself is a gift of God's grace. When we cry out for deliverance as did the Apostle Paul we shall find it in our Lord (see Romans 7:24-25). Deceptions and sidetracks are as prevalent today as were the frogs of Egypt when the plagues were being poured out on Egypt. We need to cry out to God for spiritual discernment.

THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

Job 11:7 New Living Translation (NLT)

7 “Can you solve the mysteries of God?

Can you discover everything about the Almighty?

Daniel 2:47 English Standard Version (ESV)

47 The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.”



In the Bible we have "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7) and "the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16) and the latter is said to be *great*. *Great* has synonyms such as substantial, significant, appreciable, special, serious, exceptional, and extraordinary. God's plan for our redemption and restoration is *far greater* than all of our sins. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20 KJV). Let us never stop giving thanks for this. No human reasoning could ever come even close to explaining either one of these mysteries. The most learned behavioral scientists who don't take into account God's word can't explain why people commit such heinous crimes. The inspired prophet was shown the answer to this question many centuries ago. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 ESV) As we grow in our spiritual journey we become more conscious of the big picture of life and eternity and are less involved with the trivia that captures the attention of the masses. Those who live in close fellowship with God will be shown answers to the troubling questions of life in a very gentle way. Unless specifically guided to do so it is best to simply keep these precious experiences in our heart as most will not be able to understand. Answers come to us by divine revelation and this is a lifetime growing process. Those who are wise learn to *surrender to the mystery*. We need to avoid arrogance and never think we have "the last word" on anything. God is *infinite* and fills all the universe (see Ephesians 4:6). Mortals are *finite*. As we open our hearts we are privileged to receive fresh manna everyday from God's word.



GOING THE SECOND MILE

Matthew 5:41 Common English Bible (CEB)

41 When they force you to go one mile, go with them two.

Going the second mile means to depart from most popular thinking. It could include such things as being willing to overlook and forgive the faults and failures of others even

when we have been affected adversely; making the choice to return good for evil; praying for those who seem to be enemies either on the personal level or in the larger world; letting go of participating in conflict and drama; not always contending for our "rights" even when they seem to be legitimate; allowing for the fact that the opinions of others may be just as valid as ours; being willing to learn from those who differ from us; giving up on trying to correct people all the time; letting others simply be who they are; not thinking that our ways of believing and choices of living are better than those of everyone else; looking for the good even in hurtful and difficult situations both past and present; not participating in downgrading and criticizing others; giving the benefit of the doubt to the other person and much more. Second mile people look past the material senses, that which is obvious, and see a much bigger picture of life and eternity which can only be cognized through spiritual understanding. The Sermon on the Mount is very radical if taken seriously. No wonder that it is neglected so shamefully in most of our churches!

IS THERE ANY JUSTICE?

Genesis 18:25 Amplified Bible (AMP)

25 Far be it from You to do such a thing—to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as do the wicked! Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth execute judgment and do righteously?

Isaiah 59:14-15 Common English Bible (CEB)

**14 Justice is pushed aside;
righteousness stands far off,
because truth has stumbled
in the public square,
and honesty can't enter.**

**15 Truth is missing;
anyone turning from evil
is plundered.**

**The LORD looked and was upset
at the absence of justice.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 New Living Translation (NLT)

10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

Galatians 6:7-8 Common English Bible (CEB)

7 Make no mistake, God is not mocked. A person will harvest what they plant. 8 Those who plant only for their own benefit will harvest devastation from their selfishness, but those who plant for the benefit of the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit.

Hebrews 9:27 Common English Bible (CEB)



27 People are destined to die once and then face judgment.

Is there such a thing as justice in the Kingdom of God? Today there is an increasing emphasis among some that when people pass from this life, no matter how wicked they've been, they go straight to Heaven with no questions asked or accountability of any kind. They could have brought suffering and death to millions and committed every kind of iniquity known and their reward will be "heavenly bliss" *immediately* after death. No repentance whatsoever is required. The above quoted verses provide a clear answer to the question of justice but the details are not provided and we need to be very cautious in speculating about the matter (see Deuteronomy 29:29). All of us must receive our own personal guidance as to how to relate to the great issues of life and death. I think the most essential point to keep in mind is that the way we think and act each day brings a harvest of either suffering or happiness and in this sense judgment and justice are present realities (see 2 Corinthians 6:2). When we live to glorify God and to serve others we shall experience Heaven in our hearts now and pass from this present life in peace knowing that we are in His hands (see Revelation 14:13 and 22:11).



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