

Practical Devotional Daily Living

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LORD, CAUSE ME TO BE FAITHFUL!

The supreme manifestation of living in perfection, without question resides in the Lord Jesus. It is of note that He was never hurried or in a rush but neither was He ever late. He also was never anxious or upset in the sense of not exhibiting equanimity (characteristically in control of emotional or mental agitation) and composure. He always both worked and rested when it was appropriately the best course. Even more importantly, He rested from His work when He had manifestly accomplished all that had been Decreed for Him to depict, as His testimony was, "I do always the things pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). For the most part, life can often become hectic. During the course of a normal day, for many of God's people, there seems to be numerous things to accomplish but time enough to do only some of them. Most are occupied with jobs for economic support plus other affairs of maintaining themselves and their families. In today's pecuniary (money, finance) upheaval, this can be taxing to the point of mostly dominating the lion's share of ones waking hours. This seemingly emits scant opportunity for addressing the need for devotion and studying the Scriptures plus attendance to ones weekly local assembly responsibilities.

Yet, none of God's people can spiritually afford to be slothful (Hebrews 6:12) or neglectful in attendance to worship and exercises in scriptural learning exercises (Hebrews 10:25). With concentrated diligence, all must redeem the time enduring and suffering hardship as good soldiers. Even though it may seem that in each day, there is not enough time to accomplish ALL the directives that the Scriptures convey and though one may only get halfway through ones planned schedule, it must constantly be realized that it is the Lord's schedule of activities that really counts on a prioritized basis. Ones chief desire must be to honor and obey God and ones prioritized concernnot pleasing Christ (I Corinthians 7:32). It may be necessary to say "NO" to some secular functions and activities lest one should become involved in too many things. It's always best to do a few things well rather than to be saturated in too many things. But above everything else, priorities must be maintained in: 1) the committed fellowship and devotion of ones personal relationship with the Lord in prayer and scriptural studies, 2) communal fellowship within ones spiritual family, 3) in the local assembly, being faithful according to when it is possible verses when it is convenient and 4) spiritual vocational occupation in testimony of drawing attention to the exclusive Savior of human mankind.

In this regard, II Timothy 2:4 states, "no one serving as a soldier entangles himself in the affairs of this life that he may please the One who enrolled him as a soldier." Here the Greek word *strateuo,menoj* (**strah-ehv-o-meh-nos**) rendered "serving as a soldier" is a participle, conveying the inference of soldiering, waging war and being militarily involved. According to the cogitation, no one in this position *evmple,ketai* (**ehm-plehk-eh-teh**) rendered "entangles" intertwines and involves oneself in the affairs of this life. The phrase *tai/j tou/ bi,ou pragmatei,aij* (**tees too vee-oo prahg-maht-ee-ehs**) rendered "the affairs of this life," refers to business and transactions in which one engages in making a living or providing for ones physical needs. This speaks of that which is right and normal to do; however, it is wrong for a person to engage to the extent of excluding ones assignment of soldiering or ministering. While one is militarily involved, such one should have one object, which is *i/na tw/| stratologh,santi avre,sh|* (**een-ah to strah-ol-oy-eeen-dee ahr-ehs-ee**) rendered "to please the one who enrolled him as a soldier."

In this context, it is assumed that all the soldier's physical needs are provided, as Philippians 4:19 states, "and my God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." This denotes that ones prioritized purpose should be to please the one who has enrolled such one. In applying this, two things need to be observed: (1) soldiering for Jesus Christ should be concentrated on doing the best job possible, thus ones secular engagement of providing for physical needs should be construed as a secondary function (I Corinthians 4:12; I Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 18:3-4) and (2) all secular workings should be geared mainly in conjunction with ones accommodative support. It is of note that this verse and context (II Timothy 2:4) address the fact that Timothy was being distracted from his ministry by a secular job. In this instance, it was necessary for him to give the lion's share of his time to teaching the Word and aiding in the disciplining of the converts in Ephesus (I Timothy 4:11-16).

The secular earthly activities, as necessary as they are, must never be construed as more important than ministering in the Eternal Heavens. In other words, ones attitude should never succumb to the notion that "I've got to go to work but I don't have to go to church. Here the inquiry may be, "who is sufficient in following these directives, as certainly in the energy of the flesh, it is a fact that from time to time everyone falters but it must be remembered that the battle is the Lord's. As one progressively rest and abides in Him, it is soon discovered that one can do all things through Christ who strengthens His elect. Hence, in standing still before Him, it is realized that He is the God who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that one can ask or think according to the power that He works in His beloved! This truth may be illustrated also in corroboration from Isaiah 30:15: "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: in returning and rest shall you be saved ... in quietness and in confidence (trust) shall be your strength." Thus, the joy of the Lord is ones strength; as such ones rest and relax in the One who has saved those abiding in the confidence of their prioritized obligation to serve their Lord!

The Disadvantage of Neglecting Personal Devotions

None of God's people would deny the importance of daily Bible study and prayer, as they face the unique situation of being daily confronted by God's Word in their daily lives, which should incite the intensiveness of studying it. These facts induce the following inquiries: 1). is it therefore really necessary to set aside a special time during each day to commune with God? 2). what should be the attitude of ones heart throughout each day? 3). shouldn't the Word of God be studied in regards to its instructions and directives 4). shouldn't it be heard and taught in correlation to its profession and 5). isn't it sufficient for the spiritual health and well-being for the various courses of life? Hence, is it really needful to arrange ones daily activities or even set some things aside to spend specified moments alone in prayerful devotion with God in Bible study?

In seeking answers to these questions, the example of Jesus in the Kingdom Scriptures may be helpful. It is of note from the earthly account of the Lord that the Word of God was a vital part of His daily routine. He without any doubt knew those applicable Scriptures thoroughly yet He meditated on

them constantly and applied them unceasingly, as His mind was saturated and immersed in the Word. Whether He was under attack by Satan or the religious leaders of His day, He would unerringly use the Sword of the Spirit, e.g., "It is written!" "Have you not read?" and "You do err, not knowing the Scripture!" For over three years, the Lord indoctrinated His disciples in the Kingdom truth. Also, if anyone was daily confronted and baptized in God's word, it was Him! Yet, an observation of His life and the pattern of His walk exemplify the evidence of His perfect humanity's daily routine of spending time with His Heavenly Father. This certifies translation of the daily activities that God's people in every dispensation ought to follow.

In the Grace Covenant, II Thessalonians 1:11 states, "for which also we do pray always for you that our God may count you worthy of the calling and may fulfill all the good pleasure of goodness and the work of the faith in power." Here it must be observed that the primary focus of the prayer is not so much for the comfort of those for whom it is requested but that they may be among them in whom Christ will be glorified, in that God would count them worthy of this calling. Some of the Greek Manuscript versions read, "your calling", in referencing I Corinthians 1:26, yet it is apparent that "the calling" is really "His calling"meaning their effectual calling. This is indeed of God, not of man and is owing not to any previous worthiness in the prayer benefactors but entirely to the undeserved grace of God, who counts them worthy, not for any worthiness in them but those having been vouchsafed (granted) this blessing of grace. Hence the focus is their effectual calling, of His own good will and pleasure, as the sense of the petition is that God *avxiw,sh(ahx-ee-o-see)* rendered "may consider, having considered" (note the subjunctive mood/aorist tense), i.e., He would manifest, having actually caused them to walk worthy of the calling with which they were called. This is a depiction of the conforming walk that is owing to the grace of God, meaning that God would grant unto them that so they might enjoy the reality of eternal glory; which though certain, should be, according to this verse, prayed for by the saints.

Happy are those who by the grace of God are counted worthy of this calling of the ultimate glory itself through Jesus Christ. In this sense, the Eternal Calling in Ephesians 4:4 is "according as also you were called in one hope of your calling," which is inseparably connected with the effectual calling. This should be desired and prayed for, as it fulfills all the good pleasure of His not as much providential as previously decreed goodness. This is the good pleasure of His grace, which intention is the whole of His gracious designs toward expressing the sovereign grace of God according to "the good pleasure of His goodness." Hence, the prayer is that all might be fulfilled, in that the process consists of some of which are fulfilled while others remained to be manifested. This all follows the course of predestination, in which are displayed the exceeding riches of His grace by the righteousness of Christ; in adoption into the household of God, in identification of regeneration and abundant mercy. All of these instances of the good pleasure of divine goodness are fulfilled in designated ones in manifesting the work of grace upon their souls and the enjoyment of the Heavenly glory in order to depict "the work of the faith in power."

Devotional faith is an operative grace attended with good works but it is not a work of the flesh, for one cannot produce goodness or exercise it of oneself, as it is the work of God, of His operations, which He works in His people. It has only God for its object, as its conveyance is "the work of the faith in power." Therefore, it is of God and grows exceedingly in His beloved but not as fulfilled or perfected because something always manifests as lacking. Wherefore, He is the author and finisher and this will be done "with power" not of the flesh, for this work is neither began nor carried on nor will it be finished by the might and power of humanity but the same hands, which laid the foundation of it, manifestly raises it up, carries it on and gives the finishing stroke to it. Hence, it is done exclusively by the power of God and so the conveyance, "the work of the faith in power" is without authentic challenge, "by His power." This is greatly displayed in the production of faith in view of all ones shortcomings to venture alone in salvation. Thus, one can never out of oneself offer the efforts of ones righteousness but the righteousness of Christ for ones acceptance by Him. This is due to His exceeding greatness of power in enabling faith for encouraging, supporting and maintaining under the most difficult circumstances. Such enablement is depicted occasionally under severest persecutions,

even at ones hour of death, which is overshadowed in view of Eternity, wherein it has received its actualized manifestation.

The Disadvantage of Neglecting Congregational Fellowship

It is certainly true that ones personal devotions set the framework for such ones devotion in fellowship in their local congregations. Mostly, ones neglectfulness of attendance in worship and fellowship in assembling usually mirrors ones laxness in such ones attention to private devotion. None of God's people would deny the benefits of devotion to congregational fellowship yet too many contently forego the weekly privileges of communal worship, prayer and Bible study. The daily stressful confrontations that are thrust upon all that dwell on the Earth should incite every child of God to desire closer spiritual communications and exercises of hands on enlightenment that are gleaned from embellishing the Scriptures.

These facts induce consideration of Hebrews 10:23-25. Verse 23 states, "may we hold fast the unwavering confession of the hope, for the One who has promised is faithful." The Greek verb *kate,cwmen* (**kaht·ehkh·o·mehn**) rendered "may we hold fast" is in the present tense and subjunctive mood denoting that God's people should continuously hold fast or firmly maintain their *o`mologi,an* (**om·ol·oy·ee·ahn**) rendered "confession," i.e., what is professed and avowed to be true. Hence, they are to hold this confession without vacillating because it is unwavering. Here the question is raised: what is the unwaveringly confession of the hope? According to Hebrews 3:6, one can confidently (boldly) hold fast and glory in the hope set before such one and according to Hebrews 6:11, every believer should diligently seek to be fully assured in the hope until the end. According to Hebrews 7:19, "the Law perfected nothing but it brought in a better hope through which one is drawn nearer to God." Thus the references to the Greek word *evlpi,doj* (**ehl·pee·thos**) rendered "hope" may be identified with the "Blessed Hope" in Titus 2:13. In this sense, the confidence in holding fast to the unwaveringly confession of the hope is thoroughly entrenched, "for the One who has promised is faithful." This statement is very significant, for it indicates that this hope is based on what God has promised and He is FAITHFUL, in that He always has kept and continuous to keep His promises (I Corinthians 1:9; 10:13).

Verse 24 states, "and may we consider one another to incite unto love and good works." This may be translated, "and may we consider one another" or it may be rendered "we should consider one another." Note that the Greek verb *katanow,men* (**kaht·ahno·o·mehn**) rendered "consider," refers to ones need to understand, perceive and be concerned about the needs of others. The reciprocal pronoun *avllh,louj* (**ahl·lee·loos**) rendered "one another" denotes that each one in the local assembly is to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of every other person. This concern is to be expressed in a manner, which will incite, stir up and stimulate fellow believers to greater love and good works. The standard the Word of God sets for mutual love and good works far exceeds where the majority of God's people are living today. In Philippians 1:9, the Apostle Paul states that he is praying for them that their "love might still abound more and more" and in Ephesians 2:10 he depicts the Ephesians' status of "having been created in Christ for good works."

Verse 25 states, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the custom of some but be exhorting and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." The preceding verse emphasizes the mutual responsibility, which believers have to exhort one another in their local assemblies. If believers are going to fulfill their responsibility to one another, they must assemble together; i.e., they must attend the meetings where they have an opportunity to exhort one another in the truth given to and for the members of the Body of Christ. In this passage, some of the early Hebrew believers were apparently becoming indolent (conducive to encouraging laziness) in their meeting with one another; therefore, the Apostle Paul, in speaking to all believers states that such dare not to be "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the custom of some." The Greek present participle *evgkatalai,pontej* (**ehg·kaht·ahl·ee·pon·dehs**) rendered "forsaking" denotes that God's people are not to continually abandon and let down in assembling together with other believers. Here

the Greek noun **elth-os** rendered "custom" means that they were not to do this, as it apparently was the habit, manner and practice of some (II Timothy 4:16). In strong contrast to those who were letting down in assembling together, the emphatic conveyance **avlla. parakalou/ntej(ahl-lah pahr-ahk-ahl-oon-dehs)** rendered "but be exhorting" is given. The participle **parakalou/ntej (pahr-ahk-ahl-oon-dehs)** rendered "exhorting" denoting those enabled to continually admonish and encourage themselves, as well as their fellow laborers in Christ.

Congregational fellowship exudes what stems from exhortation and admonition through the Word of God. As believers mutually exhort one another by sharing the Word with each other, they encourage, console and comfort themselves. In other words, the Holy Spirit uses the truth of His Word to encourage, comfort and produce the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of those who belong to Him (Galatians 5:22-23). The last part of verse 25 states that God's people should be so much the more diligent in exhorting one another, as they see the day drawing near. In as much as this context is writing to Hebrew believers in the Body of Christ, whose sin nature as well as all the elect, have already been judged by Christ's death in Eternity; it is obvious that the phrase **th.n h`me,ran (teen ee-mehr-ahn)** rendered "the day" refers to the day when Jesus Christ will manifestly come for those of His own, the Church (Romans 13:12; I Thessalonians 4:15-17). Hence, the cogitation is: His coming is even nearer, which means that everyone should be even more diligently exhorting one another in the Word of God (Romans 13:11).

The Disadvantage of not prioritizing the Things of God First

There are great spiritual resources available to God's people when they esteem Him first and great spiritual diminution when they don't. Oddly, many can relate to the loss of friends and finances but few can relate to the enormity of spiritual loss. The natural sense of physical deprivation in many instances interjects loss of sleep and even physical health, yet, regardless of the deficiencies induced in spiritual loss, most of God's people are oblivious to such. As God is afforded His rightful place in the lives of His elect, He occupies all the voids interjected by the experiences of presumed physical discrepancies. Thus, it's absolutely impossible to lose when God is first (Psalm 34:10; Matthew 6:33). A corroboration of this principle is illustrated in Daniel chapter 1, wherein Daniel is manifestly caused to purpose that he would prioritize the Lord first regardless of the cost (Daniel 1:8). He could have embraced the things set before him and enjoyed the king's food and wine but instead he prioritized God first and was without his minimum daily protein requirements, as he was content with vegetables and water because he enjoyed God's very best!

Here the inquiry may be: was God able to make up the difference? The answer is: Yes! He did more in that: "and at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared FAIRER and FATTER in flesh than all the youths who did eat the portion of the king's food" (Daniel 1:15). Hence, what is the application of this principle? Attendance to the things of God should be at a premium. In most busy lives of providing for oneself and families, there is little if any free timeoften not even to get enough sleep. But regardless of these induced schedules, what would happen if there was determination in such ones hearts to communicate with God in prayer and meditate upon His Word each day? But here the greater question is whether there is enough reliance and trust of God to supply what one may perceive to sacrifice in prioritizing ones focus on Him? It is certainly correct to state that God is able but this should be considered also in relationship to ones private, as well as local church devotion, in light of Hebrews 10:25. Whenever the local church assembles together for the purpose of instructions and edification of the Body of Christ, there are scriptural expectations as well as demands that grace recipients be there and so much the more as the day is approaching!

Prayer and Bible study evenings are usually conflictual with other matters but their importance mandate adjustment in the scheduling of ones secular activities. Sometimes ones faithfulness to prayer and Bible study meetings may even occupy time that will have to be made up in other ways. In these situations, what must be considered and addressed is how such affects ones spiritual progress in daily living. Here examination must be made as to: what is more important, ones perceived

convenience or one's obedience to the Lord and can Christ be trusted to make up the difference in what one may seem to be sacrificing? Corroborative answers to these questions are conveyed in the New Covenant: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Hence, God can be relied upon in every dispensation to manifest His promise, in that He also provides in fulfilling the needs of all situations!

Philippians 4:19 states, "and my God shall supply your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The writings of the antecedent nine verses are concerning things pertaining to financially supporting the ministry. In the present sense of living, this is of course very necessary and important, in that it occupies the unique position engendering the great joy of faithfully supported gifts. First, it avails the opportunity of exhibiting concern for the welfare and furtherance of the Gospel. Second, it represents the principal of the resulting outflow of spiritual fruit to the credit of the sacrificial input of natural things (I Corinthians 9:11) wherein every faithful gesture is manifestly rewarded according to one's devotion in spiritual things. It is in this view of faithfulness that God fulfills the important promise to all those abiding in spiritual dedication and fellowship. The Divinely inspired Truth for the Church, the Body of Christ, exudes authority to declare how God provides under these type circumstances. Hence, the God who delivers this promise is not some nebulous god in outer space or a figment of the imagination. Never! God is the One who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscientwho is always there and can be depended upon at all times. God's people are privileged to have a personal relationship with this Majestic God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe (Colossians 1:16; John 1:1-3). In depicting how close and real God is to His beloved, note the use of the personal pronoun *mou (moo)* rendered "my," i.e., "my God" (Philippians 1:3; Philemon 4).

It is through Divine revelation and personal experience that God's people grow and developmentally mature in prioritizing Him first in their dedication in devotion and sacrificial giving. The Scriptures require that God is personally consulted and considered as the exclusive One who supplies all the needs of His beloved! The Greek word *plhrw,sei (plee-ro-see)* translated "supply" denotes to fill, make full or furnish *pa/san crei,an (pahs-ahn khree-ahn)* rendered "every need," i.e., every single need faithful ones may have. Note that the Greek word *crei,an (khree-ahn)* rendered "need," refers to what is necessary and essential. This verse is not inferring that God will supply one's superfluous wants but all one's indispensable nutritive and shelter requirements and more importantly, all one's spiritual needs. So there is not an unconditional promise in providing unbridled wish lists. These qualified promises are directed toward those faithfully furthering the Gospel of God's Grace according to God's "riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The fullness of God's glory is resident in Jesus; therefore, God's ability to supply every need in prioritizing faithfulness in Jesus Christ is limitless yet purposeful in testimony of His eternal plan and will.

The Disadvantage of not Properly Evaluating God's Word

One of God's people's greatest problems is their lack of value and priority for the Word of God. Many too often fail to make the prioritized distinction between the spiritual and the physical, as well as the sacred and the common (I Corinthians 2:13-14; 3:1-2). In this sense, some are prone to view the actual presence of God in a frivolous manner. Instead of dwelling in the secured comfort of the Word of God, many lightly esteem and some even doubt the palpable applications of the Scriptures. For example, Philippians 2:4 states: "each one is not to be looking to the things of yourselves but also each of you to the things of others." To some, this statement doesn't seem to exact the more practical approach to life in the human mindset of rationality. It is difficult for most to fathom how this verse might apply to them personally when it is construed to place its practitioners at a great disadvantage.

Thus, the majority simply views such wordings as merely applicable in extolling the virtues of altruism (behavior that is not beneficial to or may be even viewed as harmful to oneself, while it benefits others) and thus certainly is meant merely in expressing such. Hence that is the crux of the problem! God has not given His word in jest but rather as the practical directives of godly functionality. Humanly

depraved levity (lack of steadiness) is in this sense abhorrent to the Great and Awe-inspiring God (Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:17; I John 3:16). Internalization of the cogitation of God induces the realization that all His directives are indeed rational. Hence, God's people need to abandon the flippancy that characterizes such adverse thinking and be sober (Titus 2:2, 4, 6&12) by trusting God, thus affording Him all the respect, honor and reverence that His essence commands.

Scriptural explorations of magnanimous attitudes must be hardily embraced as examples of the authenticity that such expiates the self-centered ill-attributes of humanism. This is expressive in Psalm 138:2 wherein is conveyed these words: "I will worship toward Your Holy Temple and praise Your Name for Your loving-kindness and for Your truth; for You have magnified Your Word above all Your Name." From this, it is gleaned how vigilant one should be in extolling God's Word in how it is treated, handled and utilized lest one will esteem it lightly. If God's people do not to any degree debate the worthiness of His Name then how much more should they honor and respect His Word, which He has magnified even above His Name! Our Lord Jesus never made light of the Scriptures. It may be well to observe His attitude and relationship towards the written Word of God and then imitate Him in this respect. This is how the covenant writings for each dispensation should be addressed and evaluated per its perspective constituent's relevancy.

It is in this light that Philippians 2:16 states, "paying attention to the word of life that I might boast in the day of Christ because I did not run in vain neither toiled in vein." An alternate translation of this verse is: "taking heed to the word of life unto boasting for me in the day of Christ; because I did not run in vain neither labored to the point of weariness in vain." As luminary satellites in this world, showing forth the marvelously given light (Romans 2:19; 13:12; II Corinthians 4:6), God's people are to be paying attention and taking heed continuously to the Word of Life. The Greek present participle *evpe,contej* (**ehp-ehkh-on-dehs**) rendered "paying attention," is derived from the preposition *evpi* "**ehpee**" prefixed to the verb *e,co* "**ehkho**" and has the basic connotation "to have or hold upon." As used in the classical Greek, it's most common meanings are to pay attention to, fix attention on, take heed to and observe. In confirmation of this meaning, its farther usage is translated "paying attention to" in Luke 14:7. In Acts 3:5, the context is "and he *avteni,saj* (**ehp-eekh-een**) rendered "fixed his attention" on them expecting to receive something." Acts 19:22's context *evpe,scen* (**ehp-ehskh-een**) is conveying "staying or remaining." In I Timothy 4:16, Paul's instruction to Timothy is *e;pece* (**ehp-ehkkeh**) rendered "pay attention to and take heed to" ... yourself and the teaching; remain in them." Thus, "fix attention on" and "take heed" to are substantiated as the most prevalent meanings in the Greek Papyri.

The Grace Covenant Scriptures teach and prioritized emphasis on the spiritual growth and maturity of God's people. It is in this light that the Holy Spirit functions in identifying their daily lives to what they are eternally in Christ. Hence, the goal of this grace is to be manifestly blemish-less children of God shining forth as lights in a corrupt world. Since conformity to the image of Christ is the focus (I Thessalonians 3:13), it is most logical to emphasize the need to fix attention on the Word of life (II Timothy 1:10; I John 5:11-12). Here the statement *lo,gon zwh/j* (**log-on zo-ees**) rendered the "Word of life" refers primarily to the epistle writings, which constitute parts of the Word of life, as well as the spoken Word of God. In view of what is stated in II Timothy 1:10, the phrase "Word of life" must be interpreted as truth contained in the Mystery deposited with the Apostle Paul for the present (grace) dispensation (II Timothy 1:12; Titus 1:1-3).

Granting this, the latter phrase's conveyance is that paying attention to the Word of life will be, as Paul stated, "unto boasting for me in the day of Christ." The thought is that adherence to God's Word will be unto the end of *eivj kau,chma* (**ees kahf-khee-mah**) rendered boasting, bragging and glorying (in the Lord) in the day of Christ. Note that the Greek phrase *eivj h'me,ran Cristou/* (**ees ee-mehr-ahn Khrees-too**) rendered "in the day of Christ," may also be translated "unto the day of Christ." According to this translation, boasting, i.e., testimony of the Lord's working is manifested when the obedience of God's people become obvious and continues unto the day of Christ. This boasting is because of and on account of the fact that those that are manifested in this vein do and did not run nor toiled in vain.

Here the Greek word *keno.n (kehn-on)* rendered ‘vain’ conveys the idea of without fruit, cold of effect or with no results; denoting those that run, walk, toil and labor as being shining lights giving heed to the Word of life. Thus, paying attention to the Word as luminaries exudes those who are manifestly faithful in spiritually ministering to God’s people (I Corinthians 9:3; II Corinthians 12:5; Galatians 6:14; I Thessalonians 2:19).

The Disadvantage of viewing the Scriptures Strictly Academic-wise

God’s people must shun today’s tendencies of simply academically viewing the Scriptures; as such inevitably rob them of the enjoyment of the identification of their eternal relationship, as well as their earthly walk in the Lord. Unfortunately, the traditional use of the Scriptures has been prioritized in focus of the physical-earthly sense, while it’s dominate spiritual-Heavenlies theme is deemed remote in context to many and oblivious of the relevancy of day to day living. Sadly, many fail to internalize that it is God’s precious and personal love message of their eternal bliss and status in Christ. It is only in this sense that studying soon becomes mechanical and laborious. Lost in transition is the comfort that could be experienced in lieu of the anxieties of this present manifested life, which clouds the joy of learning and applying such precious truth. Hence, the delight that comes from meditating on the things of the Lord is forfeited; being enabled by the temporal physicality that influences the majority of Scriptural studies. Absence of the Eternal View, most are void of the testimonial verse of prose, "beyond the sacred page I seek You, Lord! My spirit pants for You, O living Word!" Ones attitude towards the Word of God is of the utmost importance (I Thessalonians 5:20; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-3; 3:12-19; 5:11-6, 9; 12:25-29).

God’s people must be ever teachable before Him, continuously quick to hear and always having their hearts fertile to receive with meekness the imparted Word (Romans 15:18). The following questions might serve as ways to assess the progression of ones introgression against developing coldness towards God’s Word: (1) is there a prayerful approach in preparation of the heart in studying the Scriptures? (2) Is there internalization of spiritual evaluation and corresponding appreciation of the Lord for what He decreed for those whom He eternally loved? (3) How are these directives of God applicable to the present manifestly daily things in life? (4) What are the motives and motivations for studying God’s Word? (5) What opportunities are afforded to share these truths with others? (6) What value is there in interfacing God’s Word with family, friends and acquaintances? (7) Experimentally speaking, what is the palpability and probity of the testimony: "Lord, how I love Your Word; it is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold; it is my meditation day and night?" For the Scriptures not to lose their uniqueness and preciousness, they need to be constantly ingested in ones spirit. Even in this present age of Grace, these corroborations in Psalm 19 and 119 are of great encouragement, as they exclaim what should be God’s people’s attitude towards His love and the counsel of His Will (Ephesians 1:11). Those abiding in Christ, more specifically in His Word; abide in experiencing the joy of relaxing in what He has said!

The Scriptures’ conveyances of the love of God ultimately resides in the status of Him presenting His elect perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28). The relation of these conveyances are unto the end of maturing and developing, i.e., to be like Christ (II Corinthians 4:10). The mutual ministry of studying and learning afford ideal opportunities to manifest God’s purpose in that such is processed through the teaching, encouraging and internalizing modes of the things of the Lord! In this sense, Colossians 1:5 states, “because of the hope that is laid up for you in the Heavenlies, which you previously heard in the Word of the Truth of the gospel.” Here the accusative case of the Greek word *dia (thee-ah)* renders it “because of” or ‘on account of,’ in that it is a primary preposition denoting the channel of an act. In this sense, the focus is the effective hope of God’s people in that which is reserved for them in the Heavenlies. Note that the Greek clause *th.n evlpi,da (teen ehl-pee-thah)* rendered “the hope” conveys the specific idea of projection beyond the present time capsule. Designation-wise, “the hope” imbues the expectation of looking forward to or longing for something manifestly futuristic.

One obvious problem is that many of God's people have not been taught some of the basic truths about the eternal essence of Christ and His Church. This explains why there isn't much enthusiasm and motivation by the fact that they will meet Him in the air and ever be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:17). While some have probably had explained to them some truths pertaining to the judgment seat of Christ (I Corinthians 3:14; 4:5), they in essence do not exactly know what "in Christ" entails. Hence, the certainty of Eternal Hope is somehow obscured, as it is not known what is manifestly involved. If the comprehension of this Truth was fully realized, the impact would be so strong, it would stimulate them to increased faith in Christ and a greater love for the things of God. This hope effectively produces genuine spirituality in consideration of how it makes a real impact on daily living for Christ. Thus, what is learned about this hope draws attention to speaking of this hope, of which is stated, "which you previously heard in the word of the truth of the gospel." The Greek word *prohkou,sate* (**pro·eek·oo·sah·teh**) rendered "previously heard" denotes that which had been heard about in past time, thus such information is specifically gleaned from what is heard or taught from the Word of God.

The information that is taught by the Gospel of Grace constitutes both what should and must be heard about the Heavenly Hope. That which corresponds to grace teaching engenders information about manifested future hope in the Heavens in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). The phrase "the word of the truth of the gospel" can well be interpreted to mean the message which belongs to the Gospel. i.e., the message of truth is the contents of the Gospel. This entails an apposition relationship, i.e., the message of truth IS the Gospel and the Gospel IS the message of truth. The important thing to comprehend is that the Gospel is constituted of truth and part of this truth engenders the fact that one day God's people will be manifestly with Christ in glory (Colossians 3:4; Philippians 3:20-21).

The Disadvantage of Reading, in lieu of Studying the Scriptures

Reading the Bible strictly for the purpose of gleaning academically physiological facts does not take into account that it is impossible to glean good things for the wrong reasons. It's possible to be commended by men for ones perceived grasp of the Scripture's contents and yet be void of the comprehension of its intended spiritual contents. Spiritual maturation is concerned more about **why** something is done than with **what** is done, in that the knowledge of purpose forms the impetus of an action or inaction. In other words, the motivations for the action cultivate the premise of the action. Hence, **what is being doing** should always be defined by **why it is being done**. Not only does God consider actions but the motivations of such. One of the great disadvantages that God's people encounter is to become religious-conscious rather than God-conscious. The concern should be more about pleasing the One who died and rose again on behalf of His elect (II Corinthians 5:15) than pleasing religious systems and organizations.

When ones engages in surveying the Scriptures, it should be all for the glory of God and not the praise of men (I Corinthians 10:31). Studying God's Word must be as unto the Lord, as ones sight should not be on academic aggrandizement but fixed on Christ. One of the mainline reasons for studying is to properly assess the attributiveness of God's collateral in accommodating His relation to depraved mankind. First and foremost, ones aim must be to please Christ; knowing that He shall dispense ones predetermined gradation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:9-10); then shall every one of His elect have praise of God. It going to be a very unfortunate thing to discover that what has been cherished by many was built primarily upon a faulty foundation of wood, hay and stubble. After the flames subside, none of men's accolades will survive, as it will be manifestly displayed that which is worthwhile. Hence, it is exclusively according to whether it is "well done" or have such doings been exercised in futility? May the reverence of the Lord persuade functionality in alliance with right reasons and attitudes (II Corinthians 5:11).

The enlightened response is to be faithful (I Corinthians 4:2) and well-pleasing to the Lord (II Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10), attributing unto God the results of identification to the stature of Christ and thanking Him for whatever and however He has chosen concerning His beloved. This

principle must be applied to every aspects of ones life. For example, in considering the servant's requirements, is the rendering of such service as unto Christ or as unto ones self convenience? In the Kingdom Gospel, the Lord gave ample admonition about performing religious functions for the wrong reasons: "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:5). In this view, one automatically forfeits the glorious enlightenment of the Heavens, in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). One may earn the adoration of ones peers as they humanly assess ones "Christian services of record" and yet when such one stands before Christ there will be the manifestation of the genuine records: "and there is not a created thing not manifest before Him but all things naked and open to His eyeswith whom is our reckoning" (Hebrew 4:13). May ones sole trepidation be of not pleasing Him! As the verse of Scripture conveys, "and all, whatever you may do in word or in work, (do) all things in the name of the Lord Jesusgiving thanks to the God and Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).

Colossians 3:23 states, "whatever you do, work it out of the soul, as to the Lord and not to men." In this verse Paul set forth the proper basis for motivation. The phrase *o] eva.n poi]h/te (o eh-ahn pee-ee-teh)* rendered "whatever you do" is in the subjunctive mood, conveying the probability in translation, "whatever you might do." Note that this statement can be interpreted as being open-ended, i.e., inclusive enough to contain some evil doing with the good doing. However, in this statement, the question is not what is possible but what is the intended meaning behind the language used? In the light of the contextual teaching, the "whatever" is limited to that which is good and acceptable according to Christ. Such assumes that the tasks are to do that which will not be evil. Furthermore, its addressees are all the elect and if so, the scriptural assumption is to do only that which is good (Colossians 4:1). There is no justification for God's people to disobey Him in order that they might obey religious or secular systems (II Corinthians 13:8, 10). Obedience to God always supersedes obedience to men and their laws (Acts 4:19; 12:6-17).

Whatever God's people do, they are to "work out of the soul." The Greek word *yuch/j (psee-khees)* rendered "soul" is the seat of physical life; it is that aspect of life that man has in common with the animal world and it might be identified with man's ego. Here it is used to represent man's deepest innermost being, i.e., ones motivating center stimulating one to do work as to the Lord. Here the Greek word *evrga,zesqe (ehr-gah-zehs-theh)* rendered "work" is better translated energize and produce. Note that the present tense and imperative mood indicate that the command is to continuously, out of the depth of the soul obey by working and producing as to the Lord. Thus ones motivation should spring from knowledge of His innermost being, as obedience should be "as to the Lord and not to men." In the immediate situation of obedience, the orders are in the light of the larger God-man relation, which exudes really serving the Lord. Those who have been redeemed and purchased by the Blood of Christ are now slaves of Christ and whatever they do; they are to do heartily unto the Lord. The fact that such ones are temporarily encapsulated in human flesh is incidental. The all-important thing is that they belonged to God, in the Body of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit and thus zealously are to energetically serve Him (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Disadvantage of Much Physical Activity but Little Spiritual Substance

There are those who misperceive that they are laboring in the Lord when their efforts are in fact labors of the flesh. Such ones have become so wrapped up and entangled in the activities of running to and fro in the energy of the flesh that they are oblivious to distinguishing the natural from the spiritual. In this view, there is the illusion of seemingly accomplishing much but such "accomplishments" exude nothing spiritually profitable in the eyes of God. Such ones get so wrapped up in "serving the Lord" that they do not comprehend the Lord they are purporting to serve (II Timothy 3:7; Luke 10:38-42). Those so ruled by this inclination need heed the words of the Psalmist to "STOP and BE STILL before our God" (Psalms 46:10), in adhering the sobering words of our Lord Jesus: "without Me you can do NOTHING" (John 15:5). Out of resting and abiding in the knowledge of God's Word, flows genuine service for the Lord.

The lesson that God's people must learn is that it is impossible for anyone to please the Lord in the flesh (Romans 8:8) and it is unprofitable to walk in the flesh for: "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Romans 8:9). It should be strictly understood in this sense that unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain (Psalms 127:1). Hence, one should be careful to count fruit as God does, which means: a "fruitful day" as assessed by men is quite unfruitful as God deems such. The day will manifest how God counts fruit: "every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire" (I Corinthians 3:13). Here, the underlined question that must be considered is: does God reside in the center, the peripheral or is He even included in one's activities? In other words, is He in all one's thoughts or merely the object of afterthoughts? Is He the essential determinate of all plans or merely an accommodator of them (I Corinthians 4:19; 16:7, James 4:13-17)?

Oh how great is the sin of human independence manifested by the attitude of the heart that says, "who needs God?" (Psalms 2:1-3)! On the other hand, HOW great is the one who has learned that things are totally dependent on God and that nothing transpires except the Lord has Decreed it! God not only desires but He also commands all in respect to all relationships within Himself: "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:16-18). It is in this light that the truly scripturally informed daily walk is characterized by an attitude of constant rejoicing in life's challenging circumstances (I Thessalonians 5:16). Authentic enjoyment exudes God consciousness, awareness and dependence throughout the day (I Thessalonians 5:17). Such will manifest a thankful spirit regardless of what state one is thrust in (I Thessalonians 5:18).

As one honors and acknowledges Christ in all one's ways, such experiences the joy and confidence that comes from knowing that one's labor is not in vain in the Lord! (Colossians 1:18; Proverb 3:5-6). This spiritually encompasses: 1). abiding in His presence (Luke 10:39), 2). standing upon His Word (I Corinthians 16:13), 3). walking in His conformity (I Romans 12:2; Peter 1:14-16) and functioning in His service (I Corinthians 15:58); all for His glory, presently in manifestation and forever in eternal essence! This is exemplified by the familiar verse: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done **while abiding in Christ** shall last!" (cf. I Corinthians 15:58). Hence, the appeal is to be steadfast, solid and firm, exhibiting one's service as unmovable, unshakable and unswayable in holding to the truth of the Grace Gospel. The exhortation is to be abounding, i.e., genuinely excelling in the work of the Lord. God's people need to recognize that what they do in genuine service for the Lord is not in vain, void of effect or fruitless.

Romans 8:8 states "and those being in the flesh are not able to please God." Romans 8:7 conveys that it is not possible for the mind of the flesh to be subject to the law of God. Hence, verse 8 speaks of individuals *o;ntej (on-dehs)* rendered "being," having their being and existing in the flesh. Those who are in Christ have their being and existence in the Spirit but those referred to in this sense, manifest entirely in the sphere of the flesh. In the Kingdom Gospel, Jesus told Nicodemus that what "has been born out of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). It is a fact that the flesh is incapable of generating anything other than fleshly, i.e., it cannot produce other than its own kind. In other words, the flesh cannot, by its falsely-called good works, elevate into the spiritual dimension of godliness.

The impotency of those who are in the flesh renders such which "are not able to please God." The Greek phrase *ouv du,nantai (oo theen-ahn-deh)* rendered "not able" denotes that which do not have the power, strength and ability to please God. Here, the Greek infinitive *avre,sai (ahr-ehs-eh)* rendered "please" indicates those that are not able to do anything acceptable unto God and will never gain His favor through such functioning. Any operation in the flesh, of itself, is in an inescapable flesh-quagmire. There is absolutely nothing one can do in oneself to cause God to react favorably toward such one. Mankind by nature is dead to God and is incapable of the slightest righteous response to Him (Ephesians 2:1-3; I Thessalonians 2:15). God must in every situation instantiate all that is profitable and acceptable to Him because of the total depravity in human flesh's inability to please God. Hence, physical activities are fruitless when they are void of spiritual substance.

The Disadvantage of Illumining an Illusion of a "Christian Environment"

Contrary to what is often believed by some of the so-called mainline ministries, the atmosphere of their functionality does not exude genuine spirituality. Their doctrinal operations are not in a scriptural sense conducive to spiritual growth and maturation. Such unscriptural illusions of so-called "Christian Environments" are merely self righteous accommodations of deceptions. A genuine atmosphere of godliness can only result from the prioritization of scriptural directives for living (Titus 2:12). The depraved nature is subject only to human dynamics, which apart from God's grace, naturally tend towards rebellion, disobedience and every evil work (II Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 3:12; James 3:16; II Peter 3:17; Genesis 4:7). Hence, it must be recognized that there is inherent in the flesh, a strong susceptibility towards accommodating traditionalism and convenient wishy-washy "Christian living." Unfortunately, this is very contagious and the majority of God's people have been infected. This is characteristically exhibited by their display of anxiety, bitterness, murmuring and complaining, of which the scriptural inquiry is: "are you not carnal and walk as men?" (I Corinthians 3:3).

Actually, it is more aggrandizing for the misinformed to traditionally live in the unscriptural ways of their so-called "pure and consistent lives" rather than walk humbly and soberly in the light of God's Grace. Those abiding strictly in God's word must indeed take heed to themselves and to the teaching; remaining in them, in setting forth the palpability of salvation, for both themselves, as well as those hearing them (I Timothy 4:16). In this view, the question at issue is not about whether there is the tendency of some to let down their guard. After all, if such were so sheltered in their sectaries, why would they need to put on the whole armor of God? It would bode well to for all to comprehend what are actually the most formidable enemies, i.e., the flesh (Romans 7:17-24), the world system (I John 2:15-17), as well as Satan himself (I Peter 5:8). It must be always kept in mind that as long as God's elect are in this present evil world (Galatians 1:4), they continually need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10; II Timothy 2:1). Hence, one must never reside comfortably in traditionalism, thinking that because one is entrenched in some orthodox sector; such life will automatically be conformed to the image of Christ.

Hence, one should be diligent according to the directives of the Grace Covenant (Colossians 4:2), in exercising unto godliness (I Timothy 4:7-8; 6:11; II Peter 3:11). Generally speaking, religious institutions do not evoke godly maturation, as this entails the manifestation of ones identification with Christ's acceptability; with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). The provisions of the Holy Spirit and God's Word alert to the spiritual dangers that confront daily living. May God's people realistically wage warfare and fight the good fight of faith, exclusively looking exclusively unto Jesus, the Captain of their salvation! (Hebrews 2:10).

Titus 2:12 emphatically states, "instructing us that having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age." The subject (THE GRACE OF GOD), as conveyed in the previous verse (Titus 2:11) is *paideu,ousa* (**peh-thehv-oo-sah**) rendered "instructing," training and disciplining *ifna avrnhsa,menoi th.n avse,beian* (**een-ah ahr-nees-ah-mehn-ee teen ahs-ehv-ee-ahn**) rendered "that having denied ungodliness," i.e., wickedness and *ta.j kosmika.j evpiqumi,aj* (**tahs kos-mee-kahs ehp-ee-thee-mee-ahs**) rendered "the worldly lusts" or the worldly desires, God's people should live in a manner pleasing to Him. Note the aorist participle *avrnhsa,menoi* (**ahr-nees-ah-mehn-ee**) rendered "having denied," refers to a given point in the past, i.e., the beginning of comprehending the teachings of grace, which has purposefully renounced and rejected all ungodly and lustful living. Thus, the Grace of God instructs all grace recipients to "live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age."

It is very important that God's people know exactly how He wants them to live. In this sense, careful consideration should be given to the meaning of the three adverbs: sensibly, righteously and godly. Note that the Greek word *swfro,nwj* (**so-phron-os**) rendered "sensibly," denotes living soundly or sanely, i.e., in an intelligent manner according to the Word of God. Here, the Greek word *dikai,wj* (**theek-eh-os**) rendered "righteously," denotes living justly and rightly or that which is

right according to God's standards and directives. Also, the Greek word *euvsebhw/j* (**ehv·sehv·os**) rendered "godly," denotes living reverent/v and piously or to have reverential attitude and manner concerning the things of God. Note that the Greek verb *zh,swmen* (**zee·so·mehn**) rendered "live" is in the subjunctive mood denoting the probability of such, yet its aorist tense conveys the predetermined proportionality of such ones living intelligently, honorably and reverentially. In II Corinthians 4:4, Satan is called "the god of this age." Galatians 1:4 states that Christ "gave Himself on behalf of our sins that He might deliver us out of the present evil age according to the will of God even our Father."

Unrighteousness, from the beginning of time, has been manifested in varying forms in divers' ages. Such as it has been categorically defined in this age must be viewed in a far greater sense than what is obviously being portrayed. All unrighteousness must be renounced and rejected by those who are informed because all that is not in conformity to the directives of God is sin regardless of how such is perceived by men (Romans 1:8, 29; II Thessalonians 2:10,12; I John 1:9; 5:17). Religious institutions today are laden with the traditions of mankind and steeped in aggradations for the praise of humanly depraved flesh. What may be traditionally defined as "Christian Environments" do not automatically qualify as righteousness if such don't mirror the directives of a "Scriptural Environment." The sober testimony of un-scripturally functioning religious institutions is: "having a form of piety and its power having denied; from these be turning away!" (II Timothy 3:5).

The Disadvantage of Submitting to the Authority and Ordinance of Men.

By electing to be voluntarily placed under the authority of religious institutions, many of God's people have forfeited the peace and serenity that is evident when adhering to the directives and instructions of the Grace Covenant. Instead of subjecting themselves to the administrations of men's authorities, such ones will bode very productively, in their allegiance, solely as unto the Lord (Romans 13:1; Ephesians 5:21; I Peter 2:13; 5:5). The Greek verb *u`pota,ssw* (**eep·ot·ahs·so**) literally means "to rank under." One of its usages is as a military term, which indicates that God's people are to abide unto their proper place and rank. Hence, such ones are to submit cheerfully to every regulation, requirement and rule of their status as members of the Body of Christ; no matter how inconvenient or unnecessary it may seem. There is no option other than displaying supreme submission and obedience to the Authority of God. Any derivation from this only functions to the detriment of the one following such a course.

The Word of God properly conveys every aspect of Christ-honoring channels for all of His elect to follow. This personally inscribes administrating the daily order of life's problems and how they might be addressed through diligent study of the Grace Writings. This in effect explicates the correct way to make known to the representatives of the traditional institutions what should be adhered to as the proper actions in their functioning. Thus, there is no need for humanly inspired edits and instructions that run counter to the Scriptures. It is possible to strictly follow the grace directives and yet abide above the sphere of the carnal changes and rebellious trends that are challenging the current Christian landscape. As the world clamors for its rights and privileges, many "Conservative" institutions have become proactive against such in a strictly legalistic sense. May all scripturally informed ones realize that they are exclusively love-slaves of the Lord Jesus (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and have the right and freedom to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28).

God's people must also guard against carnal attitudes, in that their confession must exhibit reverence, honor and respect at all times whether or not such agrees with modernistic trendy personalities or delight in the assignments such induce. May all be esteemed in love and yet the value of the high calling avail in alignment to what has been assigned to grace recipients (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7,17). May all be much in prayer for the profession of grace in light of all the carnal disputations and foolish questions that must be challenged, knowing that they can only gender strife (I

Timothy 1:4; 6:3-4; II Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9; Philippians 2:14). In speaking against such, may God's people search their hearts and determine that they will share only those things that will edify and profit one another (I Timothy 1:4; I Corinthians 14:26 (last phrase); 8:1; Ephesians 4:29). All students of the Grace Covenants must work together as a team to extol spiritual truth, which should not only be taught but practiced!

Colossians 3:24 states, "knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; you serve the Lord Christ." The previous verse (23) conveys that whatever one does, it should be to eagerly work as to the Lord. This verse gives the reason why one is to directly serve the Lord, namely, because "the reward of the inheritance" will be received directly from the Lord. The Greek participle *eivdo,tej* (**ee-tho-tehs**) rendered "knowing" indicates prophetic knowledge of future rewards. The Greek noun *avntapo,dosin* (**ahn-dahp-oth-os-een**) rendered "reward or recompense" denotes equitable retribution or proper recompense. Posturing the enlightenment that one's service is the results of God's designed Decree, this reward will be proportionate to a repayment for what has been done (I Corinthians 3:12-15; 4:5). Now in establishing the fact that there is a reward manifestly waiting, the next consideration is what this reward is. The genitive case of the Greek noun *klhronomi,aj* (**klee-ron-om-ee-ahs**) rendered "inheritance" or as it would imply, the reward that belongs to the inheritance, is the inheritance that is to be given to or received by such faithful ones.

As documented in Acts 20:32, God gives the inheritance "among (or with) all those who have been sanctified." Ephesians 1:18 speaks of the "riches of the glory of His inheritance among (in or with) the saints." These two passages emphasize the truth that all faithful ones have awaiting them a future inheritance. Specifically, this inheritance involves receiving the essence of the glorified resurrection body (Ephesians 1:14; II Corinthians 1:22). In Ephesians 5:5, the implication is that all the elect have "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." According to Hebrews 9:15, those who have been called will receive "the eternal inheritance." In view of the fact that faithful ones are going to manifestly receive an inheritance as a "reward" from the Lord; therefore such ones are to render their service to the Lord. Hence, Informed ones should render their service "as to the Lord" and "directly serve the Lord." It is very significant to observe that the name "Christ" is joined to the word "Lord" in Colossians 3:24. The Greek noun *kuri,w* (**kee-ree-o**) rendered "Lord" is used with reference to both earthly lords or masters but it is specifically referencing the Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. The focal point is that instead of being absorbed in physical/earthly institutional type slave circumstancesgrating and chafing in them, God's people need to have a proper spiritual orientation to the Lord, Christ. In recognition that Christ is truly the Lord and Master and that He is the one who will grant true recompense and reward for what is done on Earth, all should be fully cognizant of the Disadvantage of Submitting to the Authority and Ordinance of Men.

The Disadvantage of Comparing Oneself With Others

The spiritual growth of God's People entails them progressing to varying degrees of spiritual maturity and consistency. Unfortunately, there is the tendency at times for certain ones to assess their perceived progress by observing the way others live and conduct themselves. In doing so, there is a strong tendency to compare themselves with those deemed to be less spiritual than they but the disadvantage is twofold: First, when they see those who are "not walking in truth," they become proud and soon harbor the "we're better than them" attitude. And second, they project their "righteous and godly lives" for the purpose of portraying a distinctive atmosphere surrounding themselves or a luminous radiation of their "spiritual superiority," hence inciting envy and jealousy among such "unspiritual ones." Of course, in comparison to certain ones, their lives look superlative and they begin to think that they have actually reached a spiritual peak! But God has not left His beloved without ample scriptural admonitions concerning such illusions (Romans 12:16; I Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:3; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3).

The functionality of the competitive depraved nature thus endeavors: "I'm going to do everything I can to be more godly than them." Contrariwise, God's Word in no uncertain terms, exposes such as being

unspiritual (I Corinthians 12:26 (latter phrase); Philipians 2:3; Colossians 1:3-4; II John 4; III John 4). There is really only one measuring stickTHE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, which is the absolute and final standard for all matters of faith, practices and godliness. All that dwell in the mirror of God's Word are measured by the standard of absolute truth and have a correct and realistic view of themselves. Such ones are clothed with humility as they assess proper evaluation of themselves, seeing themselves as God sees them (Romans 1:29-32; 1 Peter 5:5-6). In this view, all focus must be continuously affixed solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1; 12:2) and upon others solely as the testimony of their progressions in conformity to identification in Him (I Corinthians 11:1; Philipians 3:17; 4:9).

Whenever there is evidence of fault in fellow body members, truly spiritual ones search their own hearts, realizing that they are guilty of similar things. Human personal experience and the conveyance of Romans 2:1 exemplify that the only reason sin can be spotted so easily in others is because depravity is so familiar and prevailing in all those that observe it! Thus, as sin is manifested in others, may that be a warning to all, because all in the flesh are in subjection to the same passions (I Corinthians 10:13). If there is the manifestation of godly virtues, such should exude thanks and praise exclusively to the Lord for it, praying that its progression might abound yet more and more. It is solely by the grace of God that recipients of it exhibit godliness in identification in Christ (I Corinthians 11:1).

In II Corinthians 10:12 the conveyance is, "for we are not bold to rank or compare ourselves with certain ones commending themselves but measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves; they are without understanding." This verse endeavors to expose and mute the subjective human methods that are utilized in determining spiritual credentials. Here, some were apparently claiming that they were more highly spiritualized and therefore should be esteemed more than others. These proceedings can be viewed from three angles: First, what were the genuine motives of such ones? Second, what was the Scripture's evaluation of what they were doing? and Third, how do these principles apply to those involved in the Lord's work today? Those aligned as such were beyond any doubt *sunistano,ntwn (seen·ees·tahn·on·don)* rendered "commending" themselves; denoting that they themselves were recommending and approving themselves.

Those who shared antipathy toward the characteristic of humbleness preferred the self-aggrandizing tendency of mutually commending and recommending one another, in having higher authority in the religious sphere. Those were the ones *metrou/ntej(meht·ro·on·dehs)* rendered "measuring" themselves by themselves. This denotes that they were evaluating, weighing and measuring themselves by what they themselves were. In other words, they had a subjective status quo ministry, as is so predominate in many of today's ministries. Hence they were *sugkri,nontej (seeg·kree·non·dehs)* rendered "comparing," i.e., matching and judging the likeness of themselves with themselves. Even though they were living according to the flesh, comparatively speaking, they falsely thought such was "righteous moral" living. However, the Scripture's evaluation of what this amounts to is totally negative, in stating that they were without *sunia/sin(seen·ee·ah·seen)* rendered "understanding" and void of intelligence and wisdom. In essence, the scriptural evaluation of their recommending, measuring and comparing of themselves with one another is: unintelligent and stupid. Hence, Paul statement is that those that ministered in his company were not so bold as to even dare *evgkri/nai (ehg·kree·neh)* rendered "rank," classify or compare themselves with the likes of those who were commending and praising themselves.

All the principles deduced from this verse are applicable to God's people today. First, nothing should ever be construed to esteem and laud men on the basis of their human credentials that are acquired from humanistically oriented religious and secular institutions. Second, when Bible institutes, colleges and seminaries exalt themselves because they are accredited by like institutions, they are in effect, measuring themselves with themselves, rather than on the basis of the directives revealed to the Body of Christ. Third, as trendy local assemblies measure and compare themselves with other assemblies in adopting crowd-drawing gimmicks instead of adhering to the literal teaching of God's Grace; all

scripturally informed ministries should repudiate such unspiritual posturing and adamantly reject this type carnal functioning by conveying the disadvantage of comparing oneself with others!

The Disadvantage of Misappropriating Dispensationally Unscriptural Admonitions to Members of the Body of Christ

Evaluating and disseminating the Word of God require proper apportionments of scriptural admonitions (I Timothy 4:11-16; II Timothy 4:1-5). Unquestionably, it is appropriate to defend the importance of a warning ministry; in that such warnings are manifestations of genuine love, e.g., as a loving father would warn his son lest he should be harmed. One who clearly comprehends perils and yet fails to identify such is not exhibiting love but a lack of it. Neglecting thereof to properly inform exudes either the lack of love or inability to scripturally discern truth. There is a desperate need for the proper dissemination of the Scriptures in the pulpits of today. In general, many ministries are breeding the Laodicean attitude: "we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," as they fail to realize that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked and in need of repentance" (change) to truth (Revelation 3:15-19).

In this light, it is ennobled that the informed not be timid sentinels. Insistency upon what is availed to the Church in the present dispensation demonstrates ultimate concern, even though such might be misconstrued as being out of touch with it (Galatians 4:16). Dispensational truth may not be popular to convey but it is absolutely necessary for manifested growth in maturity. Preventive medicine may not be pleasant but many times saves its recipients from the operating table or even the grave! God's people need strong doses of the applicable devotional directives such that they might amend their lives in mirroring the Word of God for the present Grace Dispensation. Dispensationally appropriate admonitions are all essential elements of indoctrinations in fulfillment of the Grace Commission (II Corinthians 5:20). To merely teach "general" truth without properly aligning such is to fatten the sheep for the wolves who will not spare the flock (II Corinthians 9:7; I Timothy 4:1; Acts 20:29-30).

Faithful Biblical teachings entail specifically aligned warnings that are relevant to the present church age. Not only did Paul not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) but he also ceased not to warn the flock by the space of three years night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). A continuous teaching and warning ministry is essential so that it might present (bring into presence) every one mature in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28). It would be profitable to read through Paul's Pastoral Epistles and note numerous warnings given ...especially to Timothy and Titus. The Kingdom Gospel's examples of the Lord Jesus are instructive (Matthew 7:15-20; 16:6-12; 24:4-5; Luke 12:1, 15), in corroborating Philippians 3:2's conveyance of dangers. It should be contemplated that none is free from the contamination of subtle errors, rendering such doctrinal defections as impossibilities. By God's design, the god of this evil age exercises control and influence over uninformed minds. In this view, many enlightened warnings are prevalent in the daily lives of God's people.

The importance of properly aligned warnings in today's pulpits exudes warning one another of the scripturally discerned dangers that daily confront the elect! These warnings must be factual, specific and relevant, as well as personal in the sense of their dispensational alignment. In every instance, oft errors must be exposed dispensation-wise as slanted ways of thinking that need correcting. It is certainly scripturally factual that all manifestations of sinful functioning must be addressed in correlation to living in perilous times with doctrines of demons on every hand. In the present evil age, God has ordained many faithful ministers who will warn night and day with tears. Yet there are disadvantages even in all of these warnings, apart from their edification and encouragement dispensation-wise, wherein God's people manifestly experience spiritual death ...not so much from the world's influence but from ill-appropriated unscriptural malnutrition! God's people are to consider one another to provoke unto love and good worksexhorting one another and encouraging one another and edifying one another ...and so much the more as the day is manifestly approaching (Hebrew 10:24-25; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:29; I Thessalonians 5:14). Ephesians 4:29 states,

“every rotten word, let it not go out of your mouth but if anything is good for edifying according to the need that it may give grace to the hearers.”

The Grace Covenant teaches admonition regarding negative behavior of those identifying in the depraved market place from which all the elect were extricated in eternity. The Greek phrase rendered “let it not go out” conveys the idea to depart from, which is in the present tense and imperative mood commanding it. The Greek conjunction *avlla (ahl-lah)* rendered “but” conveys that God’s people are to speak that which is “good for edifying” according to *th/j crei,aj (tees khree-ahs)* rendered the “need,” i.e., good for edifying, howbeit “admonishing maturity in Christ” (Colossians 1:28). This always fits the need of what is good for building-up, as determined by the need, “in order that it may give grace to the hearers.” The Greek noun rendered *ca,rin (khahr-een)* rendered “grace” basically refers to that which God freely manifests in this present dispensation (Ephesians 3:2). God uses His elect to testify His grace (Ephesians 2:4-9; I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 5:20; 9:8). God’s people need to recognize their privilege and responsibility to use every occasion to convey God’s grace to the ones internalizing such. Hence, the disadvantage of misappropriating dispensationally unscriptural admonitions to the Body of Christ must be comprehended by all dispensers of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Summary

God’s people encounter diversities of challenges, which many times bring great disappointments into their daily lives. It is certainly true that happiness and peace are spiritual commodities that every individual generally desires in daily living but are never possible when they are apportioned and appropriated un-scripturally. In documentation of the Kingdom Gospel, Jesus walked the Earth and admonished as well as encouraged His disciples: “these things I have spoken unto you; that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). This corroboratively conveys that the purpose of God entails both hurts and joys to be experienced in the human nature. Hence, the lives of created human beings have engendered such from its manifestation in the Garden of Eden and will continue to the end of time

The plight of human suffering was first manifestly conferred upon Adam and Eve and whatever is encountered in the surroundings of creation in the Time Capsule merely reflect diversified mirrored expressions of God’s eternal purpose and plan. Only “Godly Contentment” can avail in daily living, which illustrates the contentment that comes exclusively from God. The ages have witnessed many hearts filled with emotions, as the plight of individuals, families and groups of people come into focus. Everyone loves to hear stories of: happiness, living in luxury and having good health, as these are basically the dreams and goals set forth in this life as the epitome of joy. Contrariwise, the Scriptures express the most plausible spiritual countenance, i.e., “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). The contexts of this passage identifies the phrase “I have learned,” in certifying “contentment” as a “spiritual commodity” acquired solely via the internalization of ones identification in Christ Jesus.

Glimpses of this present world do not surrender “complete satisfactory” in the lives of God’s people in any physical sense. For the most part, experiences exude many tears of pain and joy intermingled; however spiritual growth to maturity exudes learning to be content and grateful in every situation of daily living (Philippians 4:11). Spiritual progress enthralls “today” and “tomorrow” as being filled with the knowledge and privileges of walking in Christ Jesus in the Heavens. This comprehension exudes continuous thanksgiving and praise every day, in recognizing that God’s daily provisions are encapsulated in the essence of “Eternity.” In this light, one can continuously thank Him for daily health but even more for the Splendor of His Glory in Eternal Salvation. Most valuable are His accomplished provisions for joint-heirship, as promised in His Holy Word (Galatians 4:1-7). May God’s people learn and then continue to live their lives as grateful ones whose heart are bowed in humility to the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth! In Jesus’ Name, Amen!

As previously conveyed, Philippians 4:19 states, “and my God shall supply your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” The antecedent nine verses are conveyed concerning things pertaining to the financial support of the Apostle Paul and his co-laborers in the ministry, as the Philippians were distinguished in occupying the unique position of being the only church that had faithfully supported them for the past 11-12 years, as their most recent gift had caused Paul a great deal of joy. First, it showed that they were concerned for both the welfare and furtherance of the Gospel through them. Second, it represented spiritual fruit to their credit and according to their spiritually induced works. This is in view of their faithfulness to the most important promises to them as well as to all those blessed to internalize and prioritize eternal things over the present conditions of this life.

Here the Divinely inspired Apostle of the Truth for the Church, the Body of Christ; states in declaration of what God decreed under given circumstances. In other words, the Eternal God who promised is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and dependable at all times in the elect’s personal relationship with the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe (Colossians 1:16; John 1:1-3). Again, in depicting how close and real God is to His beloved, the personal pronoun *mou (moo)* rendered “my” is utilized; i.e., He is personal (Philippians 1:3; Philemon 4). Thus, it is through God’s process of Divine revelation and personal experience that His people both internalize and prioritize Him first in every aspect of their livingfully comprehending that He from the beginning has been personally concerned for them, as He has and will supply ALL their needs!

As stated before, the verb *plhrw,sei (plee-ro-see)* rendered “supply” denotes to fill, make full or furnish *pa/san crei,an (pahsahn khree-ahn)* rendered “every need,” i.e., every single need His beloved may have. In this sense, the word “need” refers to what is necessary and essential and not stating that God will supply superfluous wants but indispensable nutritive and shelter requirements in the time capsule. Also, this verse does not make an unconditional promise in this respect but according to the designed conditionally qualified purpose of Him faithfully functionalizing the furtherance of the Gospel of God’s Grace. The fulfillment of this promise is according to God’s “riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Since the fullness of God’s glory is resident in Jesus (Hebrews 1:3; 2:9; John 1:14), God’s capability to supply every need of His elect in Jesus Christ exhibits no limitations! Accordingly, ones knowledge of dispensationally apportioned and appropriated Scriptures are intended to incite helpful devotional thoughts that are beneficial for all members of the Body of Christ. Such are the ones abiding under the auspices of the Gospel of the Grace of God, as those concerned about their manifested personal walk in identification of their relationship in Christ, exuding **Practical Devotional Daily Living!**