

Sound Doctrine begat Sacrificial Devotion

by Pastor George D. Cutler

Grace Gospel Ministry (Part 1)

Sound Doctrine is the most effective impetus and a key element in building ones relationship with God. The formulation of Sincere (Sacrificial) Devotion in the lives of God's people is mostly influenced by what actually believed and accepted through the internalization of truth in the Scriptures. Devotion is considered any activity, spiritually as well as physically or mentally that exudes testimony of ones knowledge of or eternal relationship with God. In a testimonial sense, devotion serves as the Earthly manifestation of or Heavenly positioning in the Body of Christ. This may be expressed by the activities that one exhibits fellowship with others or ones private display of communion in the assembly. Ones sacrificial commitment ministering is gauged by ones sincerity and consistency of service, which means that it is according to the directives given to the Grace Assembly. Here definitive instructions delineate what motivational stimuli are induced in the forum of serving God according to the Scriptures.

Basic charitable acts and prayers in and of themselves do not fully constitute the essence of what sacrificial devotion engenders. In too many instances, dedication and commitment to God and His Church are obscured through incorrect doctrinal teachings, which reflect on various types of non-dispensational devotions. Many of God's people today feel as if their lives are a losing cause because they don't perceive confidence or hope according to the Eternal Expectations. Unfortunately, Earthly Expectations are the most prevalent and influential incentives in the shaping of human mindsets and because there are many unfulfilled aspirations and goals in this life, there is simply a feeling of defeat that leads to spiritual ineffectiveness. Hence, many fall into the quagmire of just going through the motions of serving God. Most disillusionment stems from presupposing what God has determined to comprise the course of life, which catapults into unrealistic expectations of the demonstration of "miracles," which are perceived as the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and, without them they feel that there are no triumphs in their lives. The perspective given by the Gospel of Grace reveals an extremely faulty attitude of God's people. The Scriptures expose the problematic lack of non-comprehensiveness and provide a strong response to this more prevalent unbelief. The relevancy of spiritual messages needs to penetrate more lives, as they offer the triumphs exhibited in the eternal unseen sphere.

Why begin with Doctrine? Here the question may be asked, if the problem is the lack of Sacrificial Devotion and commitment, why should the focus be on doctrine? The answer is that ones motivation must be invested in the doctrines of salvation that extol God for His eternal accomplishments, i.e., His elect's placement in everlasting blissful relationships was ontologized in Eternity (Ephesians 1:3-5). When this is internalized solidifies the fact that God has in fact certified all His promises, which renders any separation from Him to be impossible (Romans 8:36-39). The knowledge of His everlasting provisions for those chosen; should dominate and influence what is believed about Him. In other words, the eternal comprehension of His love and commitment exudes the testimony that **"God is good all the time!"** Hence God's purpose for teaching and learning this truth accommodates His process for safeguarding the minds of those graced on Earth with spiritual growth for an earthly testimony of Him. At times God does not seem very loving to those that are spiritually uninformed, because of their tendency to assess things according to their worldly circumstances. In this view, there are many days of frustration and disillusionment, which in fact does not afford them the means to know and be faithful to Him. Being close to the Lord engenders use of the route that He designates according to His good pleasure.

In spite of the rampant presence of erroneous doctrinal teachings, God's design for the use of Sound Doctrine will be preserved until Christ returns again for the Grace Church. There is only one doctrinal teaching today that makes this claim, even though such is not taught in the best-known evangelism.

seminaries in the country, which for the most part foist veiled secularity for spirituality and devotional livin Hence many of God's people are just going through the motion of service to God, as they subconsciousl prioritize earthly occurrences to provide the premises for their delight and devotion. However, sooner or lat that misplaced delight evaporates into disbelief and then discouragement. Unenlightened views of interfac with God are crammed with volumes of dubiously connected unbiblical instructions..... mostly written by : called scholars or churchmen with impressive academic credentials but who do not sincerely subscribe to t established directives for faithful service exacted from Paul's epistles to the Grace Church. Histori Christian orthodoxy does not for the most part champion unseen things nor pursue spiritual experiences I are in lieu constantly adopting New Age meditation methods, blending secular thought and devotion wh incorporating humanly inspired spirituality into the church. This to one degree or another actually harmoniz paganism and eco-spirituality, as these errors tend to breed other errors in defiance of sincere spirituality devotion

Well-rounded doctrinal teachings are necessary for the purposes of charting scriptural courses for devotion service to God. Dispensational research of God's word exudes comparison and ultimate refutation of t majority of many recognized and accepted forums of so-called mainstream ministries whose traditio functions portray the influence of men. .Such "unscriptural spirituality" is not rooted in an understanding God's revelations for the Grace Church but quote extensively those who speak more of direct physi experiences with God than Scriptural-inaugurated ones. When they discuss prayer, it doesn't sound at all l the prayers in the Grace Testament but rather secular encounters. Their techniques mirror the relaxat methodologies that are prioritized more to the cares of physicality than sincere (sacrificial) devotion.

In the present secular atmosphere, there is a disconcerting disconnect in many of God's people, as it perta to Devotional spirituality because very few rely purely on Scriptural sources. Genuine Devotional spiritua exudes the scriptural disciplines that prioritizes and endorses responsiveness to eternal unseen stim When one surveys the numerous Scriptural citations in the Gospel of Grace, the overwhelming majority : exhortations geared to motivate devotion and service to God void of any apparent physical gratification. these, it is the spiritual, heavenly, unseen and non-material entities that are the primary sources references. Hence, ones devotion is not effectuated by that which is seen but unseen else faith would not needed because sight would be sufficient. It is strictly in this sense that II Corinthians 5:7 states (Greek Te) "for through faith we walk, not through sight." Note that the Greek preposition **thee-ah** rendered "throug basically means through the agency of. Here the thought is that the median of t believer's **pehr-ee-paht-oo-mehn** rendered "walk," i.e., life and conduct is through the faith which God continuously generating in such ones through His Word.

The key word in this verse is the Greek noun **pees-teh-os** rendered "faith." it is important to understand h this faith is produced, as it accounts for the fact that some of God's people manifest no faith, some a little, : others exhibit almost unlimited sacrificial adherence to what their faithfulness signifies. One answer evinced in Romans 10:17, which states "then faith (fullness) is out of hearing, and the hearing is through t word of God." This indicates that God utilizes His Word to stimulate faith (fullness) in the minds of His ele Hence the vast majority of God's people learning are through listening and studying (Ephesians 3 Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 5:27; I Timothy 4:13), as this what God uses to incite and increase fa through the TRUTH OF HIS WORD, which he has given for the Church, the Body of Christ. Thus faith devotion and service comes "through" the agency and energizing of the Word of God, as it is internaliz (Hebrews 4:12). There is a direct correlation between the manifestation of living by faith and t comprehension of doctrinal instructions in God's Word, namely, the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to t revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25).

Accordingly, there are two possible manifestations of living either through faith or through sight. To l through faith involves a faithful relationship with Jesus Christ, as it is stated in Galatians 2:20, "the life whic now live in the flesh, I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." this view, ones knowledge of the Eternal future exudes an all encompassing faithfulness in the Word of G first of all that it is indeed the WORD OF GOD, not of men. The scriptural internalization of t engenders ones spiritually faithful-walk in contrast to sight-walk, which .is succinctly expressed in Corinthians 4:18, "we are not looking at the things being seen, but at the things not being seen; for the thir being seen are temporal but the things not being seen are eternal." Hence, those who live by faith must ha

absolute confidence in the TRUTH in Paul's Epistles, i.e., confidence that he has written God's Word for the Church in the present dispensation (I Corinthians 2:10; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 1:11-14). Sacrificial Devotional living runs counter to physicality, in that those who live by sight grovel in the material things of the earth. Even though they have some knowledge of God through that which they have experienced; they have not internalized the essence of His glory to the extent that it alone is the sufficient stimulus to sacrificial devotion and service. Unfortunately, too many of God's people are motivated and captivated by hope in the world (Romans 1:16-21; Ephesians 4:20-24).

The most generous definition of the term "Sincere (Sacrificial) Devotion" is derived from various sources and quotations in the Scriptures. Without exception, spirituality forms one's course of dedication to the eternal things of God wherein the material secular things of this world are completely foreign. It is true that some sections of the Bible indeed primarily focus on the physicality of materially perceived or seen things but such is conveyed strictly in light of information germane to those particular dispensations and covenants. The elements of the Grace Dispensation are not governed nor should be influenced by quotes outside of Paul's writings unless such are in corroboration of that which is conveyed in the Grace Gospel. What may have seemed plausible for servitude in prior eras is indeed outrageously in conflict with the directives given to recipients in the present Grace age. A spiritually faithful walk embodies confidence in unseen Eternal things and testifies adamantly against most everything in conflict to the prioritization of such. Errors in Doctrine tend to breed errors in spirituality and God's people are learning their spirituality from teachers that are scripturally out of sync dispensation-wise. This is indeed a very serious problem, which is obscured by the misperceived "successes", of those who are of the opinion that these are the best days of the Church. Part of the contemporary crisis is the frequent separation of the combination tandem of devotion and doctrine, of spiritual life and the spiritual mind, as well as sound dispensational teaching. Sadly, it is as though the Church has come to the point of embracing either devotion or doctrine instead of devotion and doctrine. One of the great needs of the Church in every age but especially today, is spirituality that is doctrinally correct and devotionally sound (I Timothy 4:16).

DEVOTION THAT'S BOTH SPIRITUALITY AND DOCTRINALLY CORRECT

Genuine spiritual devotion is scripturally informed and shaped by correct doctrinal comprehension. In this sense, there is no such thing as devotional activity void of sound doctrine. For the most part sincere devotion functions on the basis of what one comprehends about God. Furthermore, one's service to God is manifested as a recital following the Scriptural formula of devoting extensive time to praise and appreciation of who God is and what He has accomplished on behalf of his elect in Eternity. Certain passages of Scriptures depict devotion in the median of confession of sins and prayer through a limited view of primarily supplications and contemplations, which reflect doctrinal comprehension of covenants arrangements prior to Paul's revelation of the Mystery. Through these conveyances, one may never perceive the relationship that exudes the eternal beliefs and pure spiritual devotion. All non-grace covenants basically contend with conscious physicality and devotion, which in effect veils genuine spirituality. In stark contrast, the Grace Covenant strives for clear overt connections between its doctrine and spiritual devotion.

Certain motivational forms of devotion should be rejected, in that their practices are merely functions because of church tradition or novelty or how they make their participants feel in lieu of such being a direct result of what the Scriptures actually teach. In this sense, un-scriptural so-called "spirituality in devotion" is practiced primarily by traditions whose practices are adopted antithetical to the Grace Doctrine. And while these works and methods may appeal to the accepted canons of orthodoxy, such are actually the fruits of heterodoxy which engender dispensational erroneous doctrines. The truth is that many proponents unwittingly usher the masses into becoming practitioners of such established traditions; thus legitimizing these errors, as they assert that some of the best models of spirituality are exhibited by embracing work-merit customs.

Dispensationally correct doctrines intensely plead for practices that are distinctly spiritually devotional. The exemplification of what the Grace conveyances actually express, give explication to the misconception of the "Crisis of Piety." Scriptural observations of the history of Christendom reveal that there are two basic types of devotional functionalities that have been discerned: Mystical and Evangelical. In the functionalities of the Church, most of Christendom is divided into these two enormous groups, which obviously assess precise definitives to the formality of these practices. Mystical devotionism is that which has been associated with divers' rituals

streams of religious duties while evangelical devotionism is that which has engendered traditional complacent servitudes of exercises and practices. The secularity of both those groups resides in the fact that they have similarly espoused beliefs strictly of religious orders. This is not to say that mystical or evangelical devotions don't have any Scriptural Truth whatsoever, for they do. In fact the boundary line surrounding them are highly demarcating walls of traditions rather than rightly divided Scriptural directives. Unfortunately, this wide plain mutually held territory of so-called orthodoxy is depended on to formulate a facilitate the functionality of many of God's people.

In recent times, mystical devotionism has increasingly welcomed representation from evangelical orthodox sectors, in effect, incorporating certain of their doctrines for governing certain devotional arenas in their functionality. Despite the confidence of mystical devotionism that certain evangelical doctrinal influences can be confined to supposedly well-marked spiritual enclaves, in reality, no form of this infiltration can legitimize their scriptural shortcomings without compromising the other dispensational borders of doctrinal protection. Mystical devotionism is what it is and does what it does because of what it espouses. It is virtually impossible to assimilate genuine spirituality while giving ground to the doctrines that permeate it. The result is that the distinctiveness of spiritual devotion becomes blurred and as the grace inspired scriptural forewarned concerning the ever present dangers of mysticism, when this challenge (of mysticism) is mitigated, devotion ceases to be sincere.

Both mysticism and evangelicalism mostly subscribe to dispensationally un-scriptural quotations of ideas and methods that function counter to genuine spirituality. As was afore-indicated, it is impossible to comprehensively certify any form of mysticism, as scripturally correct dispensation-wise. It has existed for millennia and has manifold connotations. Some functions of mysticism imbue terminologies and cogitations that lead to the misdirection of servitude, while other applications are only mysterious or ecstatic so-called spiritual experiences; hence mysticism is merely an association with the duties of religions or secret societies. The uses of these terms in the doctrines of evangelicalism are mainly quoted deferentially by mystics historically, as they are considered the servitude of Christian paradigmatic. Misapplied evangelical doctrines exude more sympathies than mysticism, which has been characterized in this way: "mysticism seeks to provide an experienced, direct, non-abstract, unmediated, association with God without one's comprehension of what the calling of Eternal Union in Christ actually entails. Without this understanding, the danger of mysticism accelerated to the point of regression in genuine spiritual devotion.

THE DANGERS OF MYSTICISM

1. Mysticism tends to overemphasize the conceptions of direct, subjective experiences with God rather than experiences rooted in and interpreted by Scriptural reasoning.

One of the numerous flaws of mystical devotionism is its overemphasis on one's so-called "direct experiences with God." This same phraseology is informally used by Mystics as a definition of "Devotional Spirituality." Hence the proponents of mysticism have coined it as a strict yet generally accepted definition engendering "one's direct personal experience of the Ultimate Reality of God." But there is no Scriptural basis for assessing such functionalities, as the characterization of finding God "through the secret of direct experience." Here it must be tersely stated that the so-called "direct experiences with God," as characterized and encouraged by Mystics, are absolutely distinguished from what the Holy Spirit conveys through the Scriptures. Sound doctrinal directives for experiences in God exude specific passages of God's revelation of Himself in the formulation of what spiritually reasoned comprehensions reflect. Mystics often exemplify imagined depth and spiritual riches in meditative experiences, which spring forth from illusions and illuminations. Hence it follows that in spiritual matters; their intuitive experiences actually take priority over the cognitive applications of God's Word. The inevitable result of this kind of spirituality is that the importance of the Scriptures to some degree is depreciated, which counters assurances to the contrary of God's Word.

Now this is not to infer that God's people are void of "direct" experiences through the Holy Spirit, or there is no value in prayer and meditation nor is this suggesting that every valid experience with God must be embarked upon with Bible study. Every child of God has moments every day when the Holy Spirit spontaneously prompts him or her with thoughts of God or the things of God. It is every believer's privilege to be enlightened in such moments by dwelling on scripturally-initiated thoughts, as this leads to profound

encounters with the Lord. In this, even physical things such as a glorious sunset, the sparkling radiance of the stars or the free laughter of children are often incorporated in the means of transporting good experiences of fellowship with Him. Also, the Lord sovereignly manifests the sense of His presence in ways that exhibit accounts bearing witness to the intangibility of one's true revival. This is occasioned in both public and private worship when one has had an unusual spiritual awareness that "the Lord is here." These direct experiences with God are valid but they are normatively intertwined with conscious doctrinal spiritual truths which assert that encounters with God are coupled with knowledge of the Scriptures, as the central place of one's spiritual experiences. Scripturally-induced experiences with God should be the norm in one's spiritual life, not the exceptionas well as the standard by which all other spiritual experiences are evaluated.

Regardless of what has been foisted, one's spiritual devotion does not abide in attempting to experience God through some meditative or transcendental method but by communications through His Word. In the Kingdom Ministry, the methodology of Jesus and the Kingdom Apostles were to incite direct experiences with God through preaching and teaching of the Scriptures (Mark 1:14-15). Then upon them having embraced spiritual life, they were not to live by mystical experiences but rather they were instructed to "live..... up to every word coming forth from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). I Corinthians 1:21 states in the Gospel of Grace, "For, seeing in the wisdom of God, the world through the wisdom knew not God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the preaching to save (having saved) those believing." Also II Timothy 3:16 states, "all Scripture (is) God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for setting aright, for instruction in righteousness." That includes growing in the knowledge of God and likeness to Christ. Devotionalism that is driven strictly by emotions and/or traditions is not representative of one's "direct experience with God." Scriptural experiences with/in God are always knowledge based; in as much as devotionalism does not engender "The Mystics of the Church" but "the Mysteries of God" (I Corinthians 4:1).

So the normative method of communing with God is through Scriptural directives. Mysticism is scripturally unsound not just because of the great wisdom in the Scriptures or the intellectual stimulation gained from spiritual deep thoughts in them but because they are the exclusive medium by which the Holy Spirit conveys the experience of communications in "these last days" (Hebrews 1:2; John 5:39). This is factual in the true sense that the inspired words do not merely inform but rather "the word of God is living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). These truths inflame the elect's spiritual minds and burn in their hearts not in the natural sense of the reading of a novel, some esteemed human's biography nor as some admired person's speech might. The Spirit of God works through the Words of God to manifestly develop growth in the new life He has imparted to His beloved in the eternal realm. It is through this process that the unmistakable voice of God is heard speaking to those that are His in ways that nourish, encourage and give confidence in a hope that mysticism can.

Note that in the phrase "who is our life" in Colossians 3:4, Christ is referred to as being our life, i.e., the life of all believers! The elect in scripturally meditating on Him in their hearts, turn to Christ as their souls are refreshed by Him and their hearts are flooded with joy hence their lips overflow with thanksgiving and adoration. Thus their desire to live for and speak of Him is freshly kindled, as this is the sort of spiritual experience such ones truly needwhen He is sought through the medium in which He has exclusively revealed Himself, i.e., through the Scriptures! This is rooted in spiritually Sound Doctrine..... first the revelation of God, then the response through the directives of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the heart is ignited by the flame of truth burning through the mind. Genuine devotionalism is epitomized in the extension of God's grace of giving life together with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). It is impossible for God's people to internalize the essence of life apart from a together-with-Christ relationship, which is only ascertainable through His Word!

Much of so-called devotionalism run counter to this fact, as some pursue the more mystical methodology of communing with God. Their mode of meditation is to do some "Bible reading first"mainly in the natural grace covenants arenas that are focused in the horizontal Earthly vantage-point of viewing God. Hence instead of meditating on what the Bible says about Christ in the Mystery's revelation of the Gospel of Grace, they simply attempt to meditate on and "experience Christ directly." Is this possible? Certainly, in the limited sense of the information revealed in those writings but this is not valid in the directives for communing with God in the present Grace Dispensation. Here the bottom line question is: what will guide spiritual meditation and devotion? No one can correctly meditate on Christ unless they know who and what He is in relationship to His elect. That information must not come from the Mysticism of the mind but must be acquired from the

Grace Gospel Scriptures. Otherwise, such meditation is like feeling in the darkness of ones imagination looking for a "Christ," which one actually knows very little of, if anything. In fact, one might have a mystical experience that is out of this world and sincerely believe that they've encountered Christ and yet not know what or whom they think they've encountered.

The standard by which one interprets and understands experiences of devotionism should be according to the Scriptures. In this sense, one must ultimately depend upon the Scriptures to assert Spirit-illumination reasoning, as opposed to ones supposedly "sanctified imagination." Even though influential humanistic doctrines on spirituality may exude some semblances of Discipline, they would not survive the scrutiny of Scriptural criticisms because of their overly mystical approaches in devotionism, particularly in meditation. There are many popular devotional practices that are accepted in the circles of orthodoxy in spite of the more controversial meditative techniques involving the imagination. Much of this has been legitimized because of its hypnotic appeal to the masses; hence phraseologies such as "sanctifying the imagination" and "stimulating the vision" suggest detailed methods of identifying the functionality of self-will. This active use of the imagination in meditation is merely a cerebral approach to historical evangelical spirituality, which pivot point has from its inception mostly dwelled in the physio-spiritual sphere.

The directives in the Grace Covenant emphatically insist upon giving primacy to doctrinal reasoning over mystical imagination. Whatever role the imagination plays, it must be informed by the Scriptures and guided by grace doctrinal reasoning in which spirituality is geared to scriptural rationality above human emotionalism. In essence, God's methodology is that His people are to be Spirit-filled yet Scripture-saturated, which excludes direct steering by sound grace doctrinal reasoning, with emotion, as appropriate as it is, filling a support but not directive role. Devotionism should gravitate toward rationality, but not so excessive, as to be humanistically rationalistic; yet not led by imaginative speculations. Comprehension of this is utterly important, as Scriptural posturing of Devotionism in ones experiences with God dictates all other devotional activities and responsibilities in ones life.

It is very noticeable that the intertwining of evangelicalism and mysticism has been so successful. This is most noted in the distinctions that are asserted concerning what comes from the mind and the heart. Note that three Greek words: **noos**, **phron-eh-o** and **thee-ahn-ee-ah** are interchangeably rendered "mind," referencing intellectual thinking and dissemination of information. Here it must be acknowledged that our suretythat which flows from the humanly depraved mind is not adequate because it is very limited and the mind mostly prioritizes only one thing at a time; based upon what it is affluently drawn to embrace. Someone once wryly said, "Prayer that comes out of the heart is not interrupted by thinking!" Even more documentary is the statement of Romans 8:26: "and likewise also the Spirit helps in our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for, even as it is necessary" In this sense, all thoughts that come out of the mind are "inadequate and unreliable."

Note also that the Greek word **kahr-thee-ah** is rendered "heart," in referencing the emotional affectations and discerned information. But there is no scriptural inference that "heart prayer," i.e., words in prayer that are heartfelt or sincere; are in any sense adequate. All that is humanly discerned is indeed flawed to some degree which evinces that there can't be any legitimate claim that the heart can communicate directly with God, for it basically follows the emotions that are perpetrated in the mind. This is borne out by the latter phrase in Romans 8:26 and verse 27: ".....but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings, as the one searching the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because according to God, He intercedes on behalf of the saints." Hence, when the heart is praying, is it conceivable that the conveyance is something else other than what is in the mind? The answer must be "absolutely not" because these mystical utterances as devout as they may sound, are not acceptableas one must scripturally hold fast to the necessity of intervention from "the mind of the Spirit."

This may be viewed as sounding a bit esoteric (limited in comprehension) to some; mainly because they are unconvinced of the influence of mysticism in so-called mainstream evangelicalism. Today's mysticism is not expressed by monkish-looking medieval mystics in hooded robes but "orthodox mysticism" is never-the-less most prevalent in the pulpits and pews, albeit wearing modern clothing. A common way mysticism is expressed today is in the desire of some to minimize preaching and teaching in order to pursue "more dramatic experiences with God." Apparently they construe the experiences that they seek to be more 1

work of the Holy Spirit than the life-directing teachings of the Scriptures. Another evidence of mysticism may occur when the Bible is used primarily for daily inspirational thoughts or when it is mainly viewed as a collection of principles for successful living, loving, working or parenting. In this view, the familiar evangelical distinction between "head knowledge" and "heart knowledge" is a reflection of the classifications that are emphasized in mysticism. As has been conveyed, this terminology implies that something can be "known" by the heart without any conscious or subconscious involvement of the mind. It is true that one can have an intellect of something without believing it and even view all that is factually true about it without committing oneself to that truth because the mind has not (been caused to) internalized the information. Here the difference is that the depraved human heart does not process through the mystical faculty to perceive the truth of spiritual things that bypasses the mind. This is the underlined proof of mysticism's penetration into mainline evangelicalism's so-called spirituality or spiritual disciplines.

In stark contrast to the modus operandi of mysticism as it has been incorporated in evangelicalism, the Scriptures are the final authority for the driving principles of sincere devotionism. Here it must be tersely stated that the so-called collective wisdom and experience of mystical encounters are in no way a substitute for the authority of the Scriptures. While most of God's people will on the surface reject the stigma of mysticism, they daily affirm it in practice, as they seek for experiences with God, which are self-generated, self-interpreted and therefore imply that the directives of God's Word are at best supplemental to their personal experiences. The sole infallible guide to one's spiritual experience is the inspired written Word of God. Mysticism's penetration into evangelicalism may indeed incite semblances of the spiritual disciplines of sincere devotionism does not function properly by feelings. Genuine spiritual devotionism has absolutely nothing to do with the inherent character of the devotee but rather it is based upon one's internalization of God's eternal love and thus the commitment of the emotional experience of performing chiefly for the audience of One (God).

Those who extol themselves in the mire of mysticism for the most part claim to be the godliest and most powerful "servants of God." Ironically, their claim is that they are no strangers to deep experiences with God yet their basis is almost exclusively their imaginations, which follow the mystical way of communicating. The message is: "I think God is speaking to me" but because such is void of scriptural guidance and confirmation they should be asking these questions: "how do I know it is God who is speaking to me, how can I know I am not communicating with men or even demons and how can I be sure that I am not the victim of hallucinations;" since this has happened to many others mystics? If they believe in mysticism as such without the Scriptures, how can they test their experiences? How do they prove the Scriptures; how do they know that they are not perhaps being deluded by Satan, as an angel of light in order to keep them from the truth of God's directives? The underlined answer is: Outside of God's Word there is no truth!

"Very well, someone may say; if that is the Scripture's criticism of mysticism, what is the spiritual way in which that one may come to this knowledge and fellowship with God?" It is quite evident and it is this: it always starts with the Scriptures, as the only authority and standard with regards to the knowledge of God. Scriptural doctrines teach that one should not look into oneselfnot to examine oneselfbut into and by the directives that have been given in the Word of God. Its instructions are that God can only be known in His own way, which is revealed in the Scriptures themselves. In discussing concerns about mysticism and the disturbing experience in the lives of some of God's people, it may be asked, where does one draw the line? At what point can it objectively be said that one goes too far in seeking an experience with God?" The obvious answer is in this sense, "when one functions without directions from the Scriptures or *scriptura* rendered "the Scriptures only," as those in the "Reformation" era would have exclaimed!

The conveyance of the first phrase of I Timothy 3:16 is, "And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness" and affirmatively great is the mystery of godliness" or "and approvingly, great is the mystery of godliness." Here the statement is that it has been affirmed, confessed and agreed to as to what the greatness of the Mystery of godliness is. So what does the phrase, "the mystery of godliness actually mean"? First, the meaning of the Greek word *ehv-sahv-ee-ahs* rendered "godliness" conveys the idea of reverence, respect and piety toward God. In Titus 1:1, the Apostle Paul ties the perfect knowledge of the truth together with godliness. Hence, godliness in this Church age would go hand in hand with obeying the truth for this Church age. There are many of God's people who are zealous and profess godliness but not in accordance with the truth for the Church, which is only an empty form of godliness (Romans 10:2; II Timothy 3:5).

Second, the Greek word *mees·tee·ree·on* rendered “mystery” as used in this context, conveys the basic meaning of a “secret.” Scripturally speaking, this word is most commonly used with reference to truth, which once was a secret but now has been revealed. For example, the “mystery of the Gospel” (Ephesians 6:1-3) references the Gospel, which contents were once a secret but are now known. So the scriptural definition of the word “mystery” means truth, which was once a secret but is now revealed. Hence, the word Mystery, used in this particular context is preferably interpreted as the secret of godliness, i.e., the secret that belongs to godliness, which is the Mystery, as the body of truth, once concealed but now revealed, which explains what the Mystery of godliness really is (1 Timothy 6:3; Titus 1:1). In other words, from the Scriptural analysis the interpretation is acknowledged that the Mystery is a revealed secret, which gives insight into true godliness!

The Grace Gospel Church Ministry believes and teaches that that the “mystery of godliness” is the body of truth, which pertains to godliness. When scripturally examined, these individual truths, as they are presently, are utterly important to observe as Mystery truth related to and centered in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-2:2-3; 4:3). He is the beginning and the end of all godliness, as the total Mystery of truth revolves around Him, His Church and His elect’s relation to Him in the Church! Hence, the only way to begin to open up the “mystery of godliness” is through the directives that give acknowledgement and instruction the truth that exclusively resides in Him. One of the key words in 1 Timothy 3:16 is *eh·phahn·ehr·o·thee* rendered “revealed or made known,” which means that which was brought to light, made visible, and was selectively made known. The context makes it very obvious that the masculine relative pronoun *os* rendered “who” refers to Jesus. Thus, there can be no doubt about the fact “who” is the revealer of secrets as well as His exclusive methodology for these (Galatians 1:12; Hebrews 1:1-2).

2. Mysticism tends to assume too much of man's natural condition.

Just about every definition of mysticism seems to assume that all people have a natural capacity to experience God. Similarly, mysticism is part of the religious environment that assures people that they have the power to combine their efforts with God's grace in matters of salvation. Here it must be understood that both these positions are categorically rejected by the Scriptures. Mystics seldom recognize the position that one's salvation by the grace of God alone through the faithfulness of Christ alone is a prerequisite for communion with God. For that matter, most mystics develop their spirituality in a traditional sense that in fact officially rejects this doctrine, even though it is very surprising how some attempt to attach a skewed concept of “free grace” to their practices. This was evidenced as far back as the Reformation debate on the matter. The small minority of those mired in mysticism that claim a semblance of trusting in Christ alone without any mixture of works for salvation, exude anomalies, as they also claim to hold to established scriptural positions, which are in stark contradictions to this dogma.

One of the greatest flaws of mysticism is its assumption of man's innate spiritual abilities. For example, they aver that there is a divine “spark” in every soul, a spark “that is indistinguishable from God Himself.” Of this so-called “soul spark,” the presumption is that God is already within the soul, which equates with the erroneous conception of universal and eternal deity within each individual soul. They believe that their spirituality consists in them having been selectively given a divine revelation from God that a divine light shines in every person, which could enviably lead all such ones to salvation. Their central teaching is that everything comes out of this “elemental truth” and that they are commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit and grace. Their thinking is that this is the median by which all may come to know their salvation and way to God through the “Divine Spirit,” which will lead them into all truth. Here someone may say, “this sounds pretty reasonable” but where are the scriptural directives in this scenario? This type of thinking is scripturally inaccurate and incredibly deceptive in every sense of sound doctrinal directions to God's people, as there is no basis for assessing a divine spark that shines within depraved human creatures.

This dogma of Mysticism strangely reflects the Synergic Doctrine of mankind's ability and optimism about the human condition by its frequent inferences to so-called self-effort. Most of what is assumed in the traditional stages of so-called “evangelical progress,” is classically the Mystic Way, i.e., the ladder of perfection, which is divided into three stages: Purgative, Illuminative and Contemplative. In this sense, there is no difficulty in modifying this approach to fit “evangelical spirituality.” While there are numerous

passages that document the scriptural experiences of confession, repentance, illumination and meditation, nowhere are these given as stages in the child of God's life. In contrast, when evangelical theology has been spoken of as stages in the experiences of God's people, they have been in sequential categories of justification, sanctification and glorification. Many Evangelicals look at some of the Mystic's practices as being odd but when closely examined, the doctrines are as closely akin as first cousins, if not outright brothers.

The Word of God does not speak of any "divine spark" of life but rather that mankind's condition is, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins, . . . and were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1, 5). In this light, "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (I Corinthians 2:16). That's why, contrary to what both the Mystics and Evangelicals purport, "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Romans 3:11) until by grace, the Holy Spirit manifests this work through the Gospel to bring God's elect to the knowledge of Christ. The Scriptures clearly convey that communion with God does not come through some mystical nor evangelical effort in ascending to God nor one descending deep within oneself to find God but through studying and internalizing the Word of God. Romans 10:6-8 states, "but the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, "who will ascend into Heaven? (to bring Christ down) or who will descend into the abyss?" (to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heartthe word of faith which we are preaching."

3. Mysticism tends to misunderstand the purpose of the work of Jesus Christ.

For the most part, the defining trait of mysticism as an experience is that it is "unmediated," in other words; it is without mediator between the mystic and God. While mystics mostly claim to confess that Jesus is God, their terminological inference of "unmediated" implies no dependence upon Christ to make their experience possible. Not that such claim to ignore Christ for they will readily say that He is all their focus. The classifications of mysticism are either "Theo-centric" or "Christ-o-centric." Christ-o-centric tends to view the "Risen and Exalted Christ," as "Master, Companion and Helper of the soul." They refer to Jesus as the "Founder" of Christianity who "is to His closest followers not merely a prophet, pattern of conduct or Divine figure revealed in the historic past but that He is the object here and now of an experienced communion of the most vivid kind." While they view Christ as indeed all of these things, there is no emphasis on Him as Redeemer, which is His most important work. They speak of Him as "risen and exalted" but not primarily because of the Scriptures' emphasis on His eternal works of salvation, i.e., justification" (Romans 4:25) but for other reasons.

Broad exposure to the mystics exudes that they are inclined to speak of Jesus more as the exemplar of propriety than as the Savior from sin." From this observation, it is evinced that the danger of mysticism is that its emphasis is concentrated too much in "the Lord's work in solving daily problems" in lieu of "the eternal workings of salvation and son-positioning." In other words, mysticism is so concerned about daily satisfying the emotions of the soul that it is for the most part oblivious to the eternal work that was accomplished in the redemption of the soul. If one has not though the gift of faith internalized the essence of Christ to the end of appreciating His eternal benefits, no mystical experience will be of any benefit beyond the imagined euphoria of the moment. Nothing is of any greater importance than the fact "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3). True spiritual communion with God is impossible until/unless ones access to Him is conveyed through comprehending the faith (fullness) of Christ. No amount of so-called "spirituality" can actually bring anyone into true fellowship with God, in that this access is only effectual in the knowledge of Him through His Word (II Corinthians 2:14; 4:6; Ephesians 1:17; 3:4; 3:19; 4:13; Colossians 1:9-10).

Ones view of Christ should not dwell in any stream of mysticism. The Child of God's comprehension of Christ must be broader and even bolder than the narrowness of physicality and carnality associated with mysticism. "Indeed, from the knowledge of God's Word, one would not hesitate to state that mysticism, as a whole, tends to depict God as just an ingredient in its operational process, which almost renders the Lord Himself unnecessary. That is a very serious statement but it is substantiated by one of the principles

of mysticism, which claims that the soul has immediate access to God. The premise of it is the mythical power to basically just relax and let go and let God speak and He will do so but ironically this process doesn't include any mediated infusion from the Lord Jesus Christ. There are so many mystical groups with much diversity among them so this statement certainly wouldn't apply to them universally. Yet there are numerous evangelical practices that subcutaneously embrace and celebrate many of the traits of mysticism when subconsciously seeking for "unmediated" experiences with God. Hence there is only one answer for such an unscriptural trait: "For there is one God and one Mediator also between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

4. Mysticism tends to overemphasize the introspective, individual and spiritually detached elements of spirituality, which is detrimental to the proper view of the outward, corporate and daily aspects of ones life.

There is no intent herein to characteristically generalize the mystics just as it is not possible to specifically assess broad traits to evangelicals or any other large group. While numerous mystics are certainly not isolationists, the ever presence of Asceticism (self discipline and will) is strangely observed in most instances, as a constant companion of mysticism. Here it is not asserted that that the mystics are disconnected individuals but usually their functions mirror those of monastic communities. But this is an admission that unlike the so-called "spirituality" of some of the historic Reformers and Puritans, mystical spirituality was originally configured in the cloister, as opposed to the everyday affairs of life. In some sectors, much of their emphasis on detachment and separation accounts for the glorification of celibacy in the mystically extreme religions. Some have in specific extreme cases abandoned responsibilities to their families in order to cultivate the so-called "interior life of devotion" of freely giving their lives completely to God. They imagine that such self imposed, flesh restricted actions form the avenue to reaching the heights of contemplation.

Most of God's people possess the directional orientation of self-ward and inward instead of God-ward and outward, in that their primary focus is upon themselves in lieu of Christ. In Colossians 1:27, the latter phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory" exhibits Christ, as dwelling in God's elect through the indwelling Holy Spirit. In the Kingdom Gospel, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be in them, afterwards, He conveyed that He would come and make His abode with them (John 14:17, 23), i.e., in conjunction with the indwelling Holy Spirit. This same inter-related concept of the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Christ is set forth in Romans 8:9-10. In Ephesians 3:16-17, the indwelling Holy Spirit and Christ are associated with the latter dwelling in the elect's hearts, as internalized through the manifested gift of faith.

The center and the heart of the glorious truth of the Mystery, is the fact that Christ is indeed in every Child of God, as this is the exclusive basis for the hope of glory. The conveyance of Romans 8:30 certifies the ultimate accomplishment of God's sovereignty, in that He has glorified His elect together with Christ. According to Philippians 3:21, the elect's bodies will be conformed to the body of His glory, i.e., their glorified bodies will be manifested like His in their eternal existence with Him. The fact that Christ is in them now, they belong to Him and are intimately related to Him right now, assure them of manifested glorification in Him. Their position of being in Christ is permanent, as they are sealed in this position by the Holy Spirit unto the manifestation of their redemption, namely, when their physical bodies will be exchanged in likeness to His Glorious Body (Ephesians 1:13-14; II Corinthians 1:22). Hence, those in Christ are assured, not through mystical deeds or thoughts but as God has sovereignly placed His elect in Christ, He will also sovereignly manifest in them His glorify, which is the hope of the Gospel.

God's people shouldn't wrap themselves in a mystical cocoon but they should indeed function separately from all organized and imagined mysticism. Some of God's people inadvertently border on becoming virtual evangelical monks, poring over mystical writings in their homes, disdaining as "unspiritual," people who are focused on the study of God's Word. This is neither scriptural nor evangelical. More broadly, this means that God's people shouldn't focus from the scriptural directives in the Grace Contract in order to practice "spirituality." Spirituality in the mystical Age of Change in effect rejects genuine devotion and then retreats into the narrow withdrawn confines of "Mystical Cultism." This gleans undeniable evidence that the ministry is indeed in dire need of scripturally informed minds.

DEVOTIONALLY EMBRACE THE GRACE DOCTRINE

If one were to visit almost any sizable Christian bookstore in America and peruse its shelves, undoubtedly while there will be a plethora of books on “practical Christian living” by popular mystical and evangelical authors, serious scriptural writings on the doctrines of the eternal workings of God are all but completely ignored. Unfortunately the shelves are replete with so-called pragmatic books on dieting, prayer, finances and sports figures but yet so deficient of information regarding the eternal doctrines of salvation’s directives to God’s people. The command of I Timothy 4:16 is, “pay close attention to yourself and to the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, you shall save both yourself and your hearers.” Here the Greek verb **ehp·ehkh·eh** rendered “pay close attention,” is derived from “**ehp·ee**” and “**ehkh·o**” and basically denotes to hold upon or to hold to, i.e., to mark, pay attention to or take heed to. In this verse, it is in the present tense and imperative mood, which denotes that the command is to continuously pay attention to oneself, i.e., to evaluate and consider ones spiritual progress in correlation to the Word of God. There is the constant allurement of carnality that is endeavoring to divert God’s people away from the Word of God, particularly away from the truth of the Mystery, God’s message for the Church in the age of Grace.

Hence, God’s people must pay close attention to the teaching. Notice the definite article before the Greek noun **theeth·ahs·kahl·ee·ah**, which assigns it the literally rendering “the teaching,” i.e., the teaching that espouses the volume of truth that Jesus Christ revealed to and through the Apostle Paul for the Church (Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:2-11). Paul speaks of this teaching as being the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24); my Gospel (Romans 2:16; 16:25); the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:10); the Word of God (Colossians 1:25); the Mystery of God (I Corinthians 2:1); the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 2:7); the Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4); the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8); the Mystery of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:19); the Gospel of Glory (I Timothy 1: 11); the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25); and he refers to it many times as that which “you have heard from me” (II Timothy 1:13; 2:2).

So God’s people are to “continue in them.” Here the Greek verb **ehp·ee·mehn·eh** rendered “continue,” is also in the present tense and imperative mode, which denotes that the command is to continuously remain and persist in the truths of the teaching for the Church in the present dispensation. This command entails being persistent in making known the great truths of the Gospel of Grace, which exudes very significant benefits for its hearers. This teaching is comprised of particularly that which is found in the epistles written by Paul, which conveys that the message of salvation for this Church age is the truth that certifies the elect as having been delivered from the power of sin and transformed into the very image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

Hence, ones spirituality goes arm in arm with ones teachings. One of the reasons why many esteem the messages of mysticism so highly is because they have very sparse knowledge of the correct scriptural doctrines. The directives of these Scriptures should mold ones dedication rather than the various religious books on devotionism. Now there may be some profitable information in some of these writings that are indeed minimally helpful in devotion but the child of God will realize far greater progressive growth and maturity from gleaning directives of the Scriptures. One must pay close attention to ones doctrine because it is the fuel for the fire that truly burns in ones heart. The heart-fires that burn only on emotion or experience will be extinguished soon as the experience fades or once the emotion is replaced by another. That which resides in the heart originated first in the mind. Even though it is possible to ascertain some academics of the doctrines in the head without them piercing the internalization aspect of the soul, such cannot pierce the soul without first being grasped by the mind.

The truth of God’s Word is the surest foundation for devotional passion for Him. In this sense, ones lack of care about truth is generally reflective of ones genuine lack of care about God, as one can not love God passionately without loving His truth passionately. Those actually longing for the Spirit of God to impart unto them richer and deeper experiences of fellowship with Him should expect such only through the truth of the Scriptures, for God the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth,” as corroborated by John 15:26, 16:13; as well as Jesus’ statement that those who worshipping God “must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). This balance of devotion and doctrine is illustrated repeatedly in the life of the Apostle to the

Gentiles. Paul was never more devotional than when he was most doctrinally in the knowledge of the eternal workings of God. At the conclusion of eleven chapters of the one of the most doctrinally dense materials ever penned, Paul rapturously exclaimed, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways cannot be tracked out! ... Because out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him is the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:33, 36). Those desiring genuine similar experiences of enjoying God must delight in the truth of His Word.

A Doctrine that's both Spiritual and Scriptural

Also, an assessment of the doctrines and doxology of the first eleven chapters of Romans exude scriptural directives regarding genuine spirituality. Even when the doctrines are correctly assessed, there is yet a need for sincere intentionality in spirituality. Both of these elements are exuberantly exhibited in I Timothy 4:16, which essentially infers, "align your life closely with sound doctrine." The phrase, "align your life" in this context means to "align your spiritual life," to relate to everything touching physical life. Here the assertion is that God's people need to be doctrinally sound in the spiritual nuances of their devotionalism, which is the larger problem in the present evangelical circles. Hence, it is always prudent to follow the Scripture's pattern of spiritual balance, which demonstrates that sound doctrine is critically directive for a godly life.

Obviously, those who are drawn to mystical spirituality as well as to evangelical spirituality, turn to the methodologies of the mystics because they claim to find some spiritual phenomena that they are not getting elsewhere. Such attend and are even the leaders of congregations that are lively but exemplify doctrinally vacuous (emptied of or lacking scriptural content) worship; so they rarely sense the presence of sound scriptural directives there. The preaching that they hear is either traditional orthodoxy or charismatically styled human philosophy without substance. Sadly, there is very little in their weekly devotional orbit that feeds the genuine scriptural fire of their affections for God. Then somewhere they read a snippet from a mystic whose expressions of ardor for God put into words their secularly limited thinking, which causes them to feel as though they have at last found a kindred spirit. Hence, the more they read this unscriptural material, the more they "realize how devotionally undernourished they were before." Then it isn't long before they falter to the misconstrued notion that scriptural exegesis may be tops in Bible study but "nothing compares with the spirituality of those who embrace these mystical traits." This illusionary cogitation is that "People need mystical help with prayer, devotion and personal discipline." Hence if the internalization of sound doctrine was never endowed within them, it is not really surprising that they have turned elsewhere.

But there is not actually any sound basis for them to go elsewhere when their ministry envelops worship and teachings strictly governed by Grace Covenantal scriptural directives, which meticulously charter the godly course of discipline for the purpose of godliness. The latter statement of I Timothy 4:7 is, "and beg off from the profane and old wives' fables; exercise yourself unto godliness." Here the Greek verb **pahr-eh-toore** rendered "beg off from," literally denotes to ask from, to ask to be excused or to decline to participate. When the allurements of mystical fables is present, one should respond by excusably declining as unobtrusively as possible while distancing oneself from consideration of such worthlessness. Here the conveyance is for all to beg off from "the profane and old wives' fables." Note that the Greek adjective **vehv-ee-loos** rendered "profane" or "vile," denotes that which is secular, worldly and unholy. The Greek phrase **grah-o-thees meh-thoos** rendered "old wives fables," refers to idle tales, fanciful stories and imaginative myths commonly told by old women.

Hence God's people are not to have anything to do with secular, fanciful myths that are commonly circulated among religious circles (I Timothy 1:4; II Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14) but they are to quietly excuse themselves in order that they might focus on the things of the Lord (Ephesians 5:15-16). In other words, instead of becoming involved in unscriptural jabbering and nonsense, God's people must exercise themselves unto godliness. The Greek verb **yeem-nah-zeh** rendered "exercise," is conveyed with respect to physical, mental and spiritual training. Hebrews 5:14 states that mature believers are those who have been granted the ability to discern between good and evil. Hebrews 12:11 speaks of those who are exercised through discipline and training which produces in them the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

In both of these passages, exercise involves use, practice, discipline and suffering. To exercise oneself in godliness involves an active pursuing of it (I Timothy 6:11), which involves agonizing the good fight of the faith (I Timothy 6:12). This denotes exercise unto godliness in keeping with the truth as committed, spotless and without reproach (I Timothy 6:3, 14).

Genuine godly devotionism in this Church age involves knowing and obeying the truth given to the Church! All the traits of mysticism invariably abide as an alternative to those seeking mythical euphoria. The traits of mysticism have great appeal to those who have misperceived the systematic teachings of devotional doctrines in the Grace Covenant as a sort of formalism and deadness in the Church. Mysticism also abides as a protest against scriptural rationalism and what some construe erroneously as a tendency to over-intellectualize the Word of God. Mysticism is concerted to put emphasis upon secular realism of the so-called "knowledge of God and communion with Him." Unfortunately, this is the popular trend currently sweeping Christendom as the right course for God's congregations. This growing interest in the mythical doctrines of mysticism is a testimony to the reality of the current crisis in today's ministries but also of the need for a Doctrine that's both Spiritual and Scriptural.

Comprehension of Sound Doctrinal Devotionalism

There are those that are hailed as great masters of spirituality that exhibit serious error in their doctrinal persuasions. Such, because of their esteemed notoriety, boldly proclaim: "If you want to know Jesus, come to us, for we have the true gospel and you can't really know Him intimately unless you are in a ministry that directly specializes in the deep spiritual things of God" While the statement is certainly correct, it is true only of ministries that primarily focus on the Eternal Doctrines espousing salvation, i.e., the messages of justification, sanctification, etc. Actually, these are the messages that equip one to know, love and be like Christ (Philippians 2:22; 3:10; Ephesians 3:19) and are consistent in their conveyances of the Holy Spirit's spirituality. Mysticism is solidly invoked in much of the so-called orthodox doctrines today that are alluring many of those who do not embrace justification by faith alone and subsequently do not recognize the fact that these teachings comprise the only source of God's infallible truth. This is not to imply that there is nothing that can be gleaned from these materials but the limited time that God's people utilize for reading dictates that such should not prioritize its focusing on the mystics.

The Grace Covenant Scriptures have an unsurpassed heritage of teachings and models of genuine spirituality that are posed to be internalized. Scripturally based information exudes both doctrinal and devotional spirituality. Unfortunately, many of God's people wrongly picture the Eternal Doctrines' explications of salvation as too complicated for their comprehension, thus assessing such, as only to be toiled over ponderously by Biblical professors and theologians. God's directives to the Grace Church are ascertainable not only to the so-called brilliant theologians but also to pastors, teachers and "laymen" alike. Such enlightenment has not been historically entrusted to so-called "men of deep piety" that have forged both their theology and spirituality from the ivory towers of human academia, but often to those under great persecution and in the turbulence of rapidly changing times. "The spirituality of the 15th and 16th century Reformation was organically related to its doctrine of spirituality that represented a challenge to the mystical statures of religion, as such had replaced the roots of genuinely gifted faith. The system of mysticism had been entrenched in many hearts and seemingly had a long and distinguished future ahead of it, in that the orthodox forces of that day had been unquestionably indoctrinated to use and perpetuate it. But the truth of God's Word is like a seed, dormant but not dead, which had lain manifestation-wise, inactive for many centuries yet capacitated of being prolifically reactivated, because it was eternally decreed by Him.

Thus, when the partnered operants of spiritual devotion and scriptural doctrine are internalized through proper teaching and such are learned, they deride all that function outside of their confines. What is mostly unattractive and disdained in the Gospel of Grace, is its revelations that destroy spiritual myths in quest for true godliness, i.e., in decrying the strongholds of human visions, dreams and intuitions that reside in too many of God's children's lives. Contrary to what has transpired in the forest of church history and elsewhere, the recipients of today's comprehension of scriptural truth must corporately lived more like those in the informed early Grace Testament churches of Paul's day. This exudes spiritual

mindedness, the glory of Christ and eternal communion in Christ. This type of dedication is truly exhibited by spiritual soaring hearts that are filled with the knowledge of God's Word; engendering prayer and devotion beyond the "valley of vision." The Eternal Doctrines are essentially the scriptural introduction of Grace Spirituality. Thus, there is no greater displaying of the infusion of spiritual reasoning than ones association through the directives of the Grace Covenant. This information is enormously influential, as it overwhelms its recipients with a sense of the glory of God and the comprehension that "nothing upon Earth can adequately depict the glories of Heaven."

Godliness is not realized through mystical exhibitions nor is the function of prayer intended to authenticate ones worthiness or spirituality through the claim of specific recorded answers to prayer. No one is unassailable in life or devotion, which is all the more reason why doctrines should focus primarily on Christ as He is ascertained through the enlightened message of the Grace Gospel. The Scriptures rightfully criticize all mystical sources that are quoted on spirituality and they also reveal gross errors in the teachings of those espousing human doctrinal and spiritual heritage. This is because all but that which has been revealed by Christ is imperfect, both inwardly and outwardly. The Scriptures themselves command in Hebrews 13:7, "Be mindful of those leading you, who did speak to you the word of God, whose faith -- considering the issue of the behaviorIMITATE." Thus since Christ is our Lord and ultimate exampleaccordingly, the directives of the Scriptures should be strictly remembered, considered, and imitated as given in the Word of God. Clearly, the exclusive directions for genuine spirituality are those doctrines that are the most faithful to God's Word. To be true to the Grace Gospel Scriptures and their devotional heritage, God's people must not embrace the traits that flow from the ranks of mysticism.

It is very important for God's people to be aware of the major pitfalls of mystical spirituality and its blatant inconsistencies as viewed from the Scriptures. Most of what is misconstrued and appreciated as its strengths, are enthusiastically embraced without its practitioners realizing that it can never be fully separated from the family of the mystical beliefs that produced it. Mysticism exudes a classic exhibition of misguided faith without exposing its dangerous traits, hence it must be explained that those who adopt its functioning as the legitimate mode of approaching God; are in effect rejecting the scriptural basis of devotionalism.

Devotionalism must resonate to both Spirituality and Scriptural Doctrine.

An observation of most ministries reveals that most of those in both the pulpits and pews are not studying scriptural doctrine. Consequently, they are absolutely spiritually impoverished in regards to their knowledgeable intimacy with God, in that their discernment of error and growth in grace is stagnated. Many pastors are more concerned about the goal of swelling their numbers than they are about the dissemination of truth in God's Word. Hence they have de-emphasized doctrine for fear that those in their ranks will lose interest, which has resulted in their congregations being filled with spiritually weak attendees. But if the leadership of ministries does not manifest a contagious love of the Scriptural doctrines, such disdain of them is certainly to the detriment of those in their ranks. Without a scriptural foundation of the doctrines and instructions of salvation, all that one has is a congregation of spiritual "children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14).

The Grace Gospel Church Ministry believes and teaches that disciplines, which are exerted in devotionalism, are more easily gleaned from what are scripturally internalized than that which is spiritually imitated. The surest way toward spiritual maturity is down the path of the scripturally doctrinal directives, in that they give characterization to the exercise of ones personal spiritual disciplines. The latter phrase of I Timothy 4:7 states, "exercise yourself, as it pertains to godliness," i.e., scripturally directed disciplining or training of oneself in the purpose of godliness. Spiritual disciplines are not an end in themselves, as some have at times made them but they are a means, when the devotional end is godliness, i.e., growth in the knowledge and likeness of Christ. But there's no godliness without them, hence, may the union of **Sound Doctrine and Sincere Devotion avail!**