

SEPTEMBER 2010

Lifestyle of

# FAITH

A monthly publication of The Faith Center Ministries

## *The* **Atonement Covenant!**

By Henry Fernandez



# Wiped out, Not Just Covered!



Dear Partners and Friends,

Under the Old Covenant, God's people focused much of their attention on remembering their sins, not forgetting them. There was a set time each year, a time referred to as the Day of Atonement, when they would make a special sacrificial offering to God for forgiveness of their sins. Animals were killed, and the blood of those animals was offered for all the sins of the people. It was considered as atonement for the lives of the worshippers.

These people knew and understood what it meant to confess their sins and repent, and they did so each year. But their sins were only "covered" in atonement by the blood of animals. Their sins were cleansed, but not erased. It was not until Jesus came and died for the sins of all mankind, and shed His precious blood, that sin could actually be wiped out completely and not just covered up.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 10:10-12, *New Living Translation*, "For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand."

Thank God for sending Jesus, who gave His life and became our atonement—who purged our sins by His Blood so we don't have to remember them ever again (Hebrews 10:2). But though we are forgiven of our sins, and have no need to keep remembering them, we must always be conscious of the One who atoned for our sins.

As you recognize the Day of Atonement during the month of September, don't allow your focus to be on offerings that would result in temporary forgiveness. Instead, bring your offerings to God in remembrance of the One who, once and for all time, atoned for your sins.

Then, prepare to receive the blessings God has promised as a result of the atonement—blessings that will prosper you in every area of your life.

*Henry Fernandez*

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Bringing people into a practical experience with God. That's the mission of The Faith Center Ministries, and the reason we publish the Lifestyle of Faith magazine.

We pray you are encouraged by the articles you read here, and that they serve to help build your faith to experience God's victory every day of your life.

—Henry and Carol Fernandez



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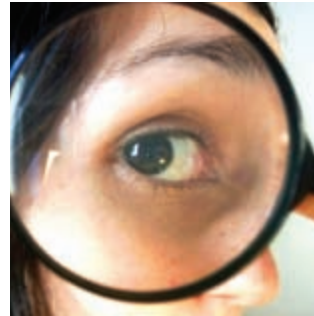


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# *The* **Atonement** **Covenant!**

For years now, I believe the Church has had a rather distorted view of the children of Israel and their deliverance from the hands of an evil Pharaoh. Although we recognize them as God's chosen people, we've looked on this nation as a group of defeated, down-trodden people who were running for their lives when they left Egypt. We've seen them as fleeing a tyrannical master who had viciously held them captive for 400 years, taking away everything they owned and leaving them with nothing.

Sadly, that distorted view has caused many today to see themselves in much the same way—as desperate beings without cause or purpose—whose hope is in man rather than a God who is more than able to meet their every need.

Looking back at the scriptures, and what they actually say about the Israelites, the truth is that while they may have lived in extreme bondage as captives for 400 years, they didn't end up that way. In fact, they didn't even come out of Egypt poor and empty-handed.

Take a look at the book of Exodus and see the true picture of the Israelites as they made their exit from Egypt, this land of tyranny. In Chapter 3, we see where, after bringing a series of plagues against Egypt, God assured Moses that Pharaoh would eventually yield to His demand to release His people and free them from bondage. In Exodus 3:19-22, He gave Moses a glimpse of what would happen to the Israelites once Pharaoh gave in:

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

### Provision for Giving

You can see from these verses that God had a plan for His people, and it included restoration of everything that had been taken away from them, plus even more. Read Exodus, Chapter 12:29-36 and you'll see what I'm talking about.

And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We *be* all dead *men*. And the people took their



God took what be-  
longed to the enemy  
and put it into the  
hands of His people.

dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them *such things as they required*. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

True to His Word, God made sure they were provided for—not AFTER they left Egypt, but BEFORE. He took what belonged to the enemy and put it into the hands of His people.

But now, I want you to see something else. Look at what the Bible says in Leviticus 23:1-4 about God's provision and how He expected the Israelites to respond: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. These *are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

Now, look at verses 26-37:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth *day* of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same

**God loves His children, and He won't just stand by and let them be abused and misused.**

day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul *it be* that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul *it be* that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It *shall be* unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth *day* of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day *shall be* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: *it is* a solemn assembly; *and* ye shall do no servile work *therein*. These *are* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day."

As a result of His delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, God established three feasts seasons—the Passover, Pentecost, and the Tabernacle or the Day of Atonement—to serve as reminders to His people of His faithfulness to them. They were to celebrate each of these seasons, "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: *I am* the LORD your God" (Leviticus 23:43). Acknowledging these feast seasons also served to

reunite the people to God and the covenant of blessing He made with them.

They were told to celebrate these three feasts seasons each year, and to bring offerings. The thing is, giving was not difficult for the Israelites to do because God made sure they had offerings to bring. How did He do that? He blessed them with wealth when He brought them out of Egypt. He loaded them down with the spoils of the Egyptians and caused them to become wealthy!

### **The Provision Is Already There**

I find it interesting that God would take the time to make such provision for His people seeing what was happening so quickly in their life. They had been slaves for 400 years, and were about to be set free. I can imagine possessions and wealth would have been the last things on their mind. And likely it was. But it wasn't the last thing on God's mind.

His mindset was totally the opposite.

Here they were, excited and glad to be free after such a long period of bondage, preparing to leave Egypt empty-handed. And here God is, looking at them and saying, "Hold on! What's wrong with you people? Here I am, about to free you from those who have held you captive for so long and taken everything you have, and all you want to do is get out of there and leave with nothing! Go from house to house and take back everything that was ever taken from you!"

I know, you're probably wondering how I could portray God in such a light. But in truth, that's really how He is. God loves His children, and He won't just stand by and let them be abused and misused. Yes, you may go through trouble or hardship for a season, and you may lose some things. But there always comes a time when that season is over. And when it's over, God will see to it that you don't come out of it empty-handed. He will always take back what the enemy has stolen and put it right back into your hands (Joel 2:25).

In much the same way He delivered and made provision for the children of Israel, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us and give us a life filled with prosperity. Jesus died to redeem us from the curse of sin, and then told us His purpose was that we live abundant lives (John 10:10).

Jesus became the reconciliation between us and God. He became our atonement! And just as the Lord

expected the Israelites to celebrate their freedom by making offerings unto Him and remembering their covenant, He looks for us to give offerings unto Him in remembrance of the One who atoned for our sin. God made covenant with His people then, and He's abiding by that same covenant today in your life and mine. Now, it's up to us to take advantage of His faithfulness and receive the blessing of His covenant. And it begins with loving and honoring Him, and a willingness to obey Him and His Word.

It doesn't matter what you been through, what you're facing today, or what will come against you tomorrow—God has made a covenant with you to bless you, and it's a covenant that no man can change. You must believe that and receive it in your heart.

It's so sad that many believers don't truly understand the covenant agreement they have with God. Ultimately, they live their lives as an outcast people—in bondage pretty much the same way as the Israelites. They make the world feel it is so superior to them, when, in fact, they have power and authority beyond anything the world could ever imagine.

Some have defined the blessing of God in terms of material things, and that is so wrong. Just because you don't have the house or car you desire, or you don't have lots of money in the bank, you think God has forsaken or denied you, or that His covenant is not working in your life. Well, that's exactly what the enemy wants you to think. That way, he can keep you focusing on worldly things instead of God.

The truth is, when you became born again, you

entered into a covenant agreement with God that no one, no demon in hell can ever change. God's covenant blessing is available to whoever will love Him, and trust and obey His Word. And that's you and me.

Abraham walked in covenant blessing with God because He believed Him.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith (Galatians 3:6-11).

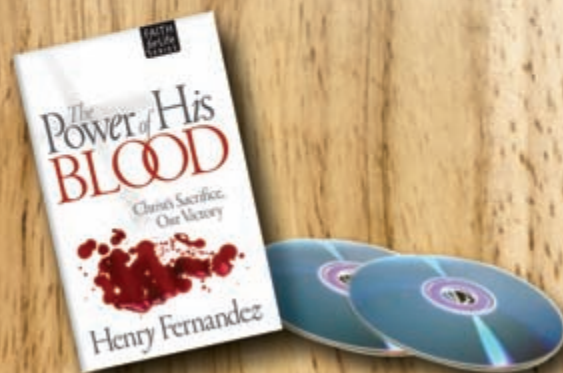
The law does not have the ability to save us. But Jesus does, and He did. He gave His life for our sins. He atoned for us so we could be reunited with our Heavenly Father, and live out our lives forever in the atonement covenant.

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# Reflections

*With Carol Fernandez*

## Think Only His Thoughts!



Because  
you are a  
child of God,  
you have  
been given  
the mind  
of Christ.  
That means  
you think  
the same  
thoughts as  
Jesus.

*"An idle mind is the devil's workshop."*

Despite what many may think, that well-rehearsed cliché cannot be found in the Bible. But nevertheless, it's a pretty true statement.

The truth is, when you take your focus off God and His Word and allow your mind to wander or dwell on ungodly things, you open yourself up to doing or saying wrong things. You place your righteous lifestyle in danger of falling under the control of the enemy.

When it comes to righteous living, the enemy is always on your trail. He knows your weakness, and he will do everything in his power to see that your focus is as far away from God and His righteousness as possible.

That's why the Bible encourages us to guard our hearts, and make sure our minds are always focused on good things. Apostle Paul put it this way in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

When you're thinking on these things, you don't leave any room to think on ungodly things. And when your mind is meditating on everything good, you can't help but walk in righteousness.

God has called you to live a righteous and holy life. But He knows it's not the easiest thing in the world to do. He knows your shortcomings and weaknesses. That's why He reminds us in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Because you are a child of God, you have been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). That means you think the same thoughts as Jesus. Think His thoughts, and you won't give the enemy any room to entice you with his evil temptations.

*Carol*





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By Kenneth Copeland



# Living the Great Adventure

**L**ife as a born-again child of God is the most marvelous adventure you could ever imagine. You wouldn't know it by looking at most Christians, but it is. If we truly knew all that Jesus has done for us and all He has provided through His death and resurrection, we would wake up every morning full of joy and raring to go!

We'd bound out of bed saying, "There's somebody out there who needs healing today and I can bring it to them. There's somebody whose life will be changed by my testimony. There's somebody who needs the joy and the love of the Lord and they're going to receive it through me!"

If we had a revelation of our inheritance in Jesus, we'd greet every day with a gleam in our eye and charge out the front door with confidence knowing there is treasure out there waiting for us. There's a wealth of souls waiting to be won. There are endless opportunities to bless people and minister to them by the power of God that resides within us. There are God-ordained financial fortunes ready and waiting for us so we'll have all the money we need to do what God puts in our hearts to do.



## Fear has deprived countless believers of the great adventure of the Christian life.

The scriptural truth is, as blood-washed, Holy Ghost-filled saints of the living God, you and I are a victory going someplace to happen. We are divinely designed to demonstrate the triumphant life of Jesus everywhere we go. We don't even have to worry about overcoming the devil and all his junk. Jesus already did it. He already defeated him. As long as we walk in faith our victory is inevitable.

Second Corinthians 2:14 says it this way, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place" (*New King James Version*).

Why, then, don't more believers live that way?

I can answer that question with one word.

Fear.

Fear has contaminated the faith of far too many of God's people. Fear has robbed them of their victory and deceived them into accepting defeat at the hands of a conquered foe.

Fear has deprived countless believers of the great adventure of the Christian life.

It has reduced them to living from paycheck to paycheck because they're afraid if they tried something new they'd fail and lose what little they have. They're afraid to go out and lay hands on the sick. (*After all, what if nothing happens? says the voice of fear. What if the person doesn't get healed?*)

They're afraid of launching out into the deep waters of life and becoming fishers of men, so they settle for going to work, coming home, watching television and going to bed. It's the same thing every day...nobody ever gets saved, nobody ever gets filled with the Holy Ghost. They just barely get their bills paid. They fix one thing and something else breaks.

As born-again children of God, we don't have any business living like that! We should be the most outrageously daring people the earth has ever seen. We ought to be doing the impossible by faith every day. We should be turning the world upside down for Jesus and having the time of our lives!

### An Age-Old Promise Fulfilled

"Oh, Brother Copeland," you might say, "I'd love to do that. I long to live that way more than anything in the world!"

Then I have good news for you. *You can!*

Jesus has already done all that is necessary to enable you to do it. He has already conquered fear. He has stripped it of its power over you. He has set you free.

That's the thing the devil hasn't wanted us to know. He has wanted us to think we have to struggle along trying to manage our fears. He's wanted us to believe that we have to put up with them...and cope with them...and try to overcome them.

But they have already been overcome by Jesus Himself. He has redeemed us from fear. In fact, according to the Word, that was a primary part of His mission as our Savior. He came not only to save us from sin, sickness, death and hell—He came to save us from fear itself.

We can see that in Luke 1 where Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied about the coming of the Messiah. Notice carefully what he said about Jesus:

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: *To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life* (verses 68-75, NKJV).

Freedom from fear isn't a new idea. It's not something we thought up recently because we need an answer for modern-day terrorism. The Bible says the prophets have been talking about it since the world began. Thousands of years ago, God swore to Abraham that through his Seed the power of fear would one day be broken.

When Jesus went to the cross, He fulfilled that promise. He paid the price so we could serve God



## The Word of God tells us that love will actually flush fear out of our souls!

without fear all the days of our lives. He destroyed fear's hold on us so we can stand up by faith in Him and be forever free.

### Disconnected From Death... Connected to Life

Until Jesus came, the only man who had ever walked the face of the earth totally free from fear was Adam. He was originally created in the very likeness of God and he had within him the very attributes of God Himself. The divine nature that is full of love, joy, peace, goodness, meekness, kindness and patience flowed freely in Adam.

But when he sinned all that changed. Spiritual death came and perverted those divine forces. Every one of them turned into the exact opposite of what they had been. Love became hate. Faith became fear. Peace became torment.

Why?

Because by submitting himself to Satan, Adam disconnected himself from the life of God and connected himself instead to the nature of the devil. Satan himself literally became Adam's god.

Adam didn't intend for that to happen. He and Eve thought they could just be gods unto themselves. (That's what the devil told them they could do.) But that was impossible. Although man is created in God's image, he was not created to be spiritually sovereign. He must have a spiritual overlord. That's an inescapable fact.

Many people today still don't realize that. They think, *There's God...and Satan...and then there's me.* But there are just two spiritual families in the earth—God's and Satan's. Everyone in the world is under the lordship of one or the other.

But thank God, by saying "Yes" to Jesus and receiving Him as our Lord and Savior, we can change families. We can be delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the family of God (Colossians 1:13-14).

When we do that, something wonderful happens. We are born again or, as Ephesians 2:10 says, we are "created in Christ Jesus." We are actually made "a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, NKJV).

Think of it this way. Just as Adam was born again from life to death when he made Satan his lord, we were born again from death to life when we made Jesus our Lord. Just as Adam was separated from God and connected to Satan in his rebirth, we were separated from Satan and reconnected to God in our new birth.

The moment we were separated from Satan, all those things in our spirit that sprang from him died. Hate died. Lust died. Fear died. At that same moment, we were reconnected to God and the divine nature sprang to life within us. The attributes of God—love, joy, peace and all the other fruit of the spirit—began to flow in our spirits like a fountain.

For you to walk in the victory and freedom from fear that belong to you as a believer, it is absolutely essential that you understand this. You are not just an old sinner saved by grace. Your old man died the death of the Cross. The sin nature you inherited from Adam was crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). It is dead and gone! Now you are a child of the living God. You have Jesus' own nature and life within you.

You don't have any business wearing those old, religious sin-tags anymore. You don't have any business talking about what a sorry, no-good sinner you are. If you've been born again, you are no such thing. You are a new creation made alive with the life of God Himself!

### Check Engine Now!

Where there was once a fountain of fear on the inside of you, there is now a fountain of faith. The devil can't pump fear into your spirit anymore. He doesn't have access to it. It's sealed by the Holy Spirit unto God (Ephesians 1:13).

The only way the devil can get fear into you is by feeding it to your intellect. He must try to get it into your soul (your mind, will and emotions) by talking you into receiving it and acting on it. Even if he is successful in doing that, he's still at a disadvantage because that fear will never take root in your born-again spirit. It has nothing to hold it in place. So the minute you rise up and start walking in the love of God, that love will wash the fear away.

That's an amazing thought but it's absolutely the truth. The Word of God tells us that love will actually

flush fear out of our souls!

First John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..." (NKJV). The words translated *cast out* there literally mean "to flush out." When you begin to exercise the love of God and the tide of love begins to rise, it just doesn't leave any place for fear to reside. And since faith works by love, the higher the tide of love flows, the stronger your faith becomes. Eventually, you get to the place where all the fear is flushed away!

The problem most believers have had, however, is this. They've let fear creep into their lives a little at a time and over the years, they've gotten used to it. Fear has become such a normal part of life that they're blind to it. As a result, they don't do what's necessary to flush it out.

What can we do about that? The last part of 1 John 4:18 gives us the answer. It says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because *fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*"

Whenever we sense any kind of torment in our lives, it's a signal to us that we have some fear there. If there's torment... there's fear. And according to this verse, if there's fear, it's a sign we haven't developed the love of God in that area.

"Yeah, but Brother Copeland..."

Don't start with the "Yeah, but..." It's the truth. So instead of arguing about it, put it to work for you. Think about it this way and you'll see how.

Whenever you sense torment about a situation, it's like the red "Check Engine" light blinking on the panel of your car.

If you pay attention to that light and do something about it, it will help you.

But if you just keep driving along thinking, *I wonder what's wrong with my engine?* you'll end up in big trouble. After that light has been blinking for about three months, you'll find yourself stranded on the freeway blaming the automobile manufacturer for a defective car!

### Get the Gleam Back in Your Eye

Obviously, it's not the manufacturer's fault. They installed that red light to get your attention. You should have done something about it the first time it blinked at you.

The same thing is true about torment. Every time you notice a flutter of anxiety in your mind or a knot of worry in your stomach, it ought to be like a flash-

ing red light to you. The moment you catch yourself thinking a fearful or worried thought, you should stop right then and deal with it.

Don't just go on and on thinking, *Oh, I don't know where my kids are. I hope they're not doing drugs. I hope they don't get out there on the freeway and get themselves killed....*

Stop these thoughts immediately. Start talking to yourself and say, "Wait just a minute here. The Scripture says he that fears is not developed in love. So I'm going to stop this fear right now and get over into the love of God before I get myself in trouble. I'm going to purposely disconnect from this fear and connect up with love."

Then just start worshiping and praising the Lord over His great love for you. Remind yourself of it and receive it by faith. Say, "Jesus, I love You and I know You love me too much to just let bad things overwhelm my life and my family. Heavenly Father, John 17 says You love me just as much as You do Jesus Himself. And I receive that love right now. I know Your love has been shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost and I thank You for it."

Don't do it just once or twice either. Do it *every time* you begin to sense that torment. The moment it arises, immediately—*immediately!*—move over into the love of God.

Then start finding ways to manifest that love toward others. Go find somebody to love somewhere. As you do, that love will begin to grow.

Keep that up and the process of flushing fear out of your soul will continue until you reach the place where there's no fear there at all. You'll begin to live the fear-free lifestyle Jesus died and rose again to give you. Just as the prophets foretold, being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, you will serve God without fear all the days of your life.

You can get up every morning with a gleam in your eye, ready to bring the saving, healing, delivering power of the Lord Jesus Christ to a lost world that is waiting to receive it.

Your life will truly become the great adventure God intended it to be.



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# Follow God, Not the World

This may come as a surprise to you, but the world has nothing to offer you.

What do I mean by that? I mean the way the world operates as a whole, its way of getting things done and the standards by which it operates, are not how God intends for you, as a believer, to live.

In fact, it is God's preference that you get as far away from the influence and control of worldly things as possible so you don't become contaminated—so you're not tempted and enticed to take on the image of worldly people.

First John 2:15-17 tells us clearly how we are to behave in this world we live in. It says, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Look at how that scripture reads in the *New Living Translation*:

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

## Three Means of Deception

Notice how that portion of verse 16, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" reads in the *New Living Translation*. It says, "a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. Whether you realize it or not, those three things are the very weapons Satan used to try and tempt Jesus with while He was in the wilderness. And they are the same weapons he's using to keep man under his control and dominion today.

Look at Matthew 4:2-11:

For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said

to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'" Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." "Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'" Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus."

Three times, and in three different ways, Satan tried to coerce Jesus into forsaking His Father and yielding His allegiance to the devil. Knowing Jesus was hungry after spending 40 days and nights fasting, Satan tried to appeal to Jesus' flesh by telling Him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." In response, Jesus said, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Thinking he could get Jesus to test God's love and faithfulness to protect Him, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and told Him, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect you.'" Jesus answered quickly, "You must not test the LORD your God."

Finally, in an attempt to cause Jesus to desire power and authority (something He already had as the Son of God), the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to him: "I will give it all to you...if you will kneel down and worship me." Jesus simply said, "You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him."

The lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life. Satan thought them good enough to try and manipulate Jesus, and they are the same weapons he is using, and quite successfully I might

## Want to get the best out of your life?

Then believe God for everything. Trust Him to prosper you with all good things, and lead you down the path to His abundance and blessing.

add, to get and keep many under his control and dominion today.

How, you wonder?

Through the selfish, prideful, lustful, and greedy cravings of the flesh. That's how.

The world uses the many facets of carnal pleasure as a marketing tool, and it gets people's attention. It shows us the fun, exciting side of life and all the material things it brings, and many go after it. The world sets its own standard for what it thinks or feels is success, and people make it their goal to reach that level. It's the enemy's formula for keeping people in darkness and blocking them from ever discovering the truth that Jesus loves them and has a better way of life for them.

Don't fall for it!

Proverbs 16:25, *NLT*, says, "There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death." That's not the path God has designed for you. It's not the path that will lead you to real success and prosperity. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:5-6, to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

Want to get the best out of your life? Then believe God for everything. Trust Him to prosper you with all good things, and lead you down the path to His abundance and blessing.

Determine today that you are not going to be like the world; that rather than copy the behavior and customs of the world you're going to let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think and act (Romans 12:2).

Don't fall in love with the world. Instead, fall in love with God and follow after Him.



# HealthyLifestyle

## What the Bible Says About Food

Patients often ask me if God wanted humans to be vegetarians. The answer is yes and no. Originally, vegetarianism was His design for all mankind:



And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so (Genesis 1:29-30).

That plan changed when the Lord said to Noah, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Genesis 9:3). The only exception was this: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (verse 4). That opened up the entire world of living things as a smorgasbord for man's eating pleasure.

But in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the Lord gave instructions through Moses about how to eat healthy. He said which animals, birds, and fish to eat. For example, they were only allowed to eat animals that chewed the cud and had split hoofs, such as cows, sheep, and goats. These rules, we now know, have a scientific basis for health.





## God's Plan for the Church

The Jews lived under those rules for centuries, and their bodies were strong and disease-resistant. The Bible says there was none feeble among all two million Jews in the wilderness (Psalm 105:37). Their phenomenal health insurance policy was based on diet alone!

Jesus also abided by those same rules, never eating pork, shellfish, catfish, or other restricted foods. He was certainly not a vegetarian, but as an observant Jew He would have followed the dietary laws. But after His death and resurrection, the dietary rules radically changed, and we are no longer under the law but under grace: "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5, *New International Version*).

The apostles and elders also gave their recommendations (Acts 15:28-29) about not eating food that had been sacrificed to idols, or eating blood or the meat of animals that had been strangled. But nowhere did they say to follow the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 or Deuteronomy 14.

As a Christian, you are free to eat anything you want. Your diet will not keep you from heaven, but if you continually eat unhealthy foods, you will get there much sooner. As Paul wrote, all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial (See 1 Corinthians 6:12). We must choose a diet that is good for us. Christians are supposed to be "living epistles." Non-Christians should look at us and visibly see a difference, not only in our attitude but also in our very appearance, which begins with what we eat.

## Back to Basics

If God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, as Hebrews 13:8 says, then what is the wisest diet for us to follow? I believe God's initial plan for vegetarianism, His first and best plan for mankind, should carry a lot of weight with us. I don't promote strict vegetarianism—and neither does God; after all, He told Peter to "get up, kill and eat" (Acts 10:13). But I do note that vegetarians live longer and may have lower incidences of heart disease and cancer. One study showed that vegetarians under the age of 65 were 45 percent less likely to suffer a heart attack than meat eaters. A significant study of Seventh-Day Adventists who ate little or no meat showed

increased longevity of life of 7.28 years in men and 4.42 years in women.

The Bible itself gives a real-life example of vegetarianism's benefits.

In the book of Daniel, Daniel and the other Hebrew children serving in the king's palace in Babylon were to be educated and nourished for three years on the king's own rich and dainty food and wine. But Daniel would not defile himself by eating the food and wine, because if he did so, he would be breaking the Hebrew health laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. He and three other Hebrews were allowed to shun the king's food and eat their choice of vegetables, grains, and water for 10 days. After 10 days, they looked better and healthier than all the other youths. Three years later, Daniel and those three Hebrews stood before King Nebuchadnezzar and were ten times wiser than all the magicians and enchanters in the kingdom.

That's a pretty good testimony for eating vegetables, grains, and drinking water.

Please don't misinterpret what I am saying; I am not advocating cutting meat out entirely. When people begin to command you to abstain from certain meats, realize that every creature of God is good, and you can have it as long as you bless it:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith ... commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:1, 3-4, *New King James Version*, emphasis added).

The key here is to practice temperance, especially when eating meats. Eating the right foods makes you physically healthy and wise. Eat the wrong foods, and you fall beneath your potential.

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## God Will Give You *Prosperity*

**A**s you are obedient to God with your Passover offering, the Father has promised extraordinary prosperity: “Ye shall serve the Lord your god, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water” (Exodus 23:25).

Using very simple terms, God taught how His blessing will make even basic staples as bread and water more refreshing and nourishing than a feast of lavish food and drink. In truth, once the children of Israel left the wilderness and entered their Promised Land, exaggerated prosperity was theirs. The scouts that had visited the land before the Israelites entered saw a land that produced an abundance of food for both man and beast.

This supernatural prosperity followed numerous examples of the Passover blessing of prosperity. Here are three quick studies:

**David**—We know he was faithful in observing the Passover. We also know, from 1 Samuel 22, that he helped engineer one of the most amazing military and social transformations in recorded history. David, though already anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king of Israel, had to flee from the jealous King Saul. He was soon joined by an unlikely and unsavory band of about 400 followers: “And everyone *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto Him” (verse 2). As captain, what did he do? From his Holy Spirit-inspired notebook (the Psalms), we know that he began preaching victory and godly prosperity. The very first sentence in Psalm 1 begins with the word “blessed” (verse 1), followed closely with “like a tree planted by the rivers...that bringeth forth his fruit” and “prosper.”

**In Psalm 23:1**, as he recognized God as his source for everything, he wrote these memorable words: “The LORD *is* my shepherd, I shall not want.” In that same psalm he declared, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (verse 6). In the Hebrew, the word for “goodness” is tied to the same root word as “plenteous in goods.”

**In Psalm 118:5**, David acknowledged his negative circumstances, testifying of his God: “I called upon the LORD, in distress; the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.” In Hebrew this indicates a place of prosperity.

We are safe in assuming that David began preaching his message of prosperity and victory to his little band of formerly distressed, debt-ridden, and discontented followers. The results? Within one generation, the country was literally overrun with abundance. According to 2 Chronicles 1:15, by the time Solomon became king of Israel, silver and gold were as plenteous as stones. Can you imagine? David built a heritage and nation so prosperous that precious metals

were as common as common rocks!

**Gideon**—In Judges 6:15, Gideon told God he was the poorest in his tribe of Manasseh. Then, after the visit from an angel and after Gideon led the march to defeat the Midianites, God caused great increase to come to him (See Judges, Chapters 6 through 8).

**Hezekiah**—During this king of Israel’s extended lifetime, the Bible records in 2 Kings, Chapters 18-20 that the people had to build many more silos to accommodate the fabulous harvests they made. This would be equivalent in today’s world of filling banks with personal wealth. Later, when his son Manasseh took the throne and no longer observed the Passover, all the wealth obtained by good Hezekiah was lost.

Then, as now, God offers the promise of prosperity to those who are obedient: “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God; for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

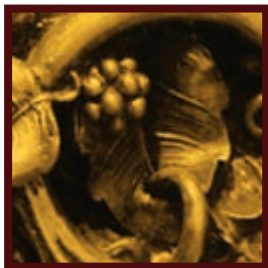
Though God promises abundance, let me hasten to say that biblical prosperity is not limited to money. In fact, when I invited Jesus into my heart, I became wealthy beyond measure, for I knew that God, the Creator and owner of everything, came inside me to dwell. As I have become more mature in the Lord through the years, I have also seen that the potential for supernatural wealth is limitless. As anyone becomes a better steward of what he or she already has, this act of obedience enables God to trust us with more and more of the richness in Him on every level, from His Anointing to talents, opportunities, wisdom, and even material riches.

### **God’s Pattern for Wealth**

Anyone who desires to gain a better understanding of true biblical prosperity has a treasury of proven guidelines provided throughout the Bible. You can grow into God’s supernatural prosperity as you follow His directions. Let me list a few basics:

**You must acknowledge that God wants you to prosper:** “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy

## Only God can cause supernatural wealth to flow through you.



soul prospereth" (3 John 2). As your soul grows and prospers, so will the rest of you. As you study the Word and apply His principles, God will give you greater prosperity.

**Tithe and give offerings:** "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*" (Malachi 3:10). The tithe is a tenth of your income—no more and no less. So you don't really "give" your tithe, since it is already His. You acknowledge His ownership of everything you possess through your tithe. Whatever you give above the tithe is your offering, which is what moves you into supernatural "more than enough" prosperity. This foundation is basic and unchangeable. Without it, the blessings from any offering, Passover or otherwise, will not be effective.

**Work so you can pay your tithe and give offerings:** "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). There are plenty of instructions throughout

the Bible about working, including this one from Proverbs 10:4-5: "He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son; *but* he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." Working should never be an end in itself, for total dependence upon the world's economic system will leave you lacking. Working enables you to give, but giving is what causes you to prosper through the planting of your seed in anointed ground.

**Pay your covenant vows to God:** "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou has vowed" (Ecclesiastes 5:4). Psalm 50:14 confirms: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." Deuteronomy 29:9 offers this commandment: "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do."

**Give to help others in need:** "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack" (Proverbs 28:27). How would you like to have a life with no lack?

**Understand that God is the source of your prosperity:** Throughout the gospels, we find 176 recorded instances in which Jesus acknowledged His Father as His source. How can we do anything less? Only God can cause supernatural wealth to flow through you. Likewise, only He can teach you how to enter the realm of supernatural prosperity: "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; *I am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17).

**Realize the Lord can even send His angel with you to make you prosper:** "And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way" (Genesis 24:40). If the Lord has called you to do a thing, He will make your way prosperous: "I, *even* I have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make *this* way prosperous" (Isaiah 48:15).

**Understand how obedience brings God's blessings:** "And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt harken unto the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 28:2). The release of God's blessing in your life is connected to your obedience. In fact, obedience to God's Word is vital to your financial success, for the Bible declares: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

**Ask the Lord for wisdom and understanding:** "Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper" (1 Chronicles 22:12-13). God will teach you supernaturally what you don't know in the natural: "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit" Isaiah 48:17).

**Expect God to cause prosperity to come into your life:** "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Just as any farmer operates, you should expect a harvest from the seed you plant. God will answer and reward you for your obedience to Him.

**Give from a cheerful heart:** "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). God will pour out His abundant blessing on you when you give cheerfully from a generous heart.

**Give your Passover offering:** Notice in Exodus 23:15 there is a prerequisite to the seven Passover blessings: "None shall appear before me empty."

I pray you will experience God's boundless provision. I can't wait to hear reports of your life filled with "no-lack blessings" promised in the Word of God, "always having all sufficiency in all *things*" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

### Kingdom Prosperity

God wants to bless you in every area of your life, including your finances. There is no limit to God's supply, for His resources are inexhaustible. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

As a special blessing, God's promise of increase is also extended to you and your children. "The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children" (Psalm 115:14). God will bless and prosper you and your children when you fear and obey Him, especially in the area of finances. "Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD, *that* delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house" (Psalm 112:1-3).

God can use you and your family to build a mighty heritage as you grow into deeper knowledge and wisdom: "The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow" (Deuteronomy 28:12).

God has a wonderful plan for our financial future. The Bible is filled with promises of the Father's blessings for those who understand and obey the Creator's fixed laws of sowing and reaping, especially when believers also realize the importance of the Passover offering. As you apply His kingdom principles, you can live an abundant life filled with financial miracles!

What seeds are you willing to plant in order to reap a bountiful, supernatural harvest of Passover blessings?

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# Live in the **Blessing** of the Blood

**T**here is an attitude prevalent among so many Christians today that limits their effectiveness, and that of the entire Church, in the work of the Gospel and furtherance of God's Kingdom. That attitude, reinforced by generations of pastors and church leaders who have not followed the whole counsel of Scripture, implies that while the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, once the sin problem is taken care of, we are pretty much at the mercy of our own resources to make our way in this world.

Today, too many Christians live in lack, in poor health, in broken relationships, and under circumstances they assume are just part of the "cross" God has called them to bear. Yes, they are saved by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and, yes, they may even be living upright and holy lives. But they somehow believe that while God sent His Son to save them from sin, they are still condemned to live under much of the curse that came with the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden.

B y H e n r y F e r n a n d e z

# Expecting and receiving the **blessing** of Abraham is what the Kingdom of God is all about.

But that is not the attitude and plan of the God you and I serve. He is a God of completeness, of order, of blessing—of destiny and the upward call. When Christ died and rose from the dead, He saved us from our sin and unrighteousness, but He did not save us to live in a vacuum. His Blood cleanses us from all sin so we can live in the blessing for which God created us in the first place.

Apostle Paul explains that when, through faith, we come to salvation through Jesus Christ, God our heavenly Father delivers us from “the power of darkness” and conveys us “into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

## ACCESS TO GOD’S TREASURE

Please understand that the forgiveness from sin that we receive through the blood of Jesus Christ does not equate into the sum total of God’s Kingdom for us as believers. Christ’s Blood is our access into the Kingdom, and once the Father has conveyed us into the Kingdom, His desire is to fulfill our destiny by giving us all the abundance that His Kingdom has to offer. Our access to the blessing comes by the Blood of Christ.

Remember that through the blood of the covenant, Abraham’s faith in God was accounted to him as righteousness. God looked at the blood that was shed when He made His covenant of blessing with Abraham, saw ahead to Christ’s Blood shed on the Cross, and promised that through Abraham, “all the nations shall be blessed” (Galatians 3:8).

The Word of God declares that today, through our faith in Christ—in His shed Blood—we are heirs of Abraham (Galatians 3:9). All the blessings that God promised to the children of Israel are ours though our faith in His completed work for us.

Jesus said He came so we could “have life . . . more abundantly” (John 10:10). Being cleansed from our sins through His Blood is the entry point to that abundant life. If we stop at cleansing, we are stopping far short of God’s best for us.

Expecting and receiving the blessing of Abraham is what the Kingdom of God is all about. When Jesus

walked the earth, He told His disciples, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Earlier, Jesus had warned them about the danger of covetousness and giving one’s efforts to the acquisition of material possessions, pointing out that “one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (v. 15).

Too many believers today have taken this verse and turned it into a justification for their poverty and lack in life. But that is not the point at all. God’s desire is not that we live in the humiliation of constant material want, barely squeaking by and always in need. His desire is that, as believers, we actively trust that He will supply our need “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19), and that we will live out of His abundance. If we live in that belief—that God wants to abundantly meet all our needs for His glory—we will not be living in the covetous mindset that fear and unbelief generate.

Food, clothing, a home, and other necessities of life are all things that unbelievers seek after—almost to an obsession. God knows we have need of those things and more, and it is His good pleasure to give them. The point is, He doesn’t want us to seek after things, but Him. Jesus sums it up, “But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12:31).

God’s abundance for you is based on your trust in Him. He told Abraham, “I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Genesis 15:1). His desire for us is the same: He wants to be both our protector and our provider. If we make loving God and seeking Him and His righteousness our first priority, our “great reward,” we can have it all. Jesus put it this way:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19–21).

# Likewise, by actively **standing** upon the blood of Jesus Christ, you are free from the curses.

Everything we treasure in life must be plunged beneath the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, where it will be purged, sanctified, and transformed. Those things that don't belong must fall away from our lives.

## ISRAEL, OUR EXAMPLE

This was God's plan for Israel as He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. Through the blood on the doorposts, He provided protection for them from the judgment He was going to pour out, followed by a mighty deliverance from bondage that included some miraculous signs that powerfully demonstrated His protection from those much stronger than they were. Through it all, God showed Himself mighty as their deliverer. He parted the Red Sea for their escape, destroyed their enemy, provided for their every need, guided them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night—and put them at the very door of their destiny—redeemed, delivered, and promised an abundance.

As they stood at the borders of Canaan, the land of great abundance that God had promised to give to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance forever, they had a choice to make. The land was theirs, but they had to go in and take it away from some intimidating enemies. Would they trust God to give them victory over those enemies and empower them to inhabit the land themselves, just as He had miraculously watched over them and provided for them since their deliverance from Egypt? Or would they believe the report of a few fearful and faithless individuals and miss out on the blessing?

Sadly, the majority of the children of Israel chose fear over faith, and God's people ended up wandering in the wilderness, just out of reach of their inheritance, for nearly 40 years until a new generation, led by the courageous Joshua, were ready to take the land.

God used that time to prepare a people for Himself—to show them the extent of His power, His unapproach-

able holiness, and His love that would go to any lengths to destroy the barriers that kept mankind from truly knowing Him.

Through His man Moses, God established an intricate system of worship and law that would give Israel—and the world—a picture of His coming Son's sacrifice for sin and of the reconciliation back to God for all mankind. That pattern of worship included a tabernacle where the presence of God would dwell among the people as well as a group of priests who would regularly sacrifice animals for the sins of the people. He also established one day out of the year, called the "Day of Atonement," when the high priest would go to the very place in the tabernacle where God's presence dwelt, called the Holy of Holies, and offer blood from a sacrificed lamb for the sins of the people.

What an awesome representation that was of the time, centuries later, when Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would take His own blood into the very Holy of Holies in God's presence and offer His own blood for our sins before the very real Mercy Seat of His heavenly Father.

You see, the tabernacle erected by Moses, and the sacrificial worship offered by the children of Israel down through the generations, could never completely take care of the sin problem of the people. The high priest could go into the tabernacle's Holy of Holies year after year, offering the blood of a sacrificed lamb for the sins of the people. But it was all just a type, a dress rehearsal of sorts, for the time when Jesus Christ would offer Himself one time for the sins of the world, reconciling us back to the Father and giving us perfect and complete access into the Holy of Holies through His shed blood.

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this



creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:11–14)?

While the tabernacle of Moses—followed by the glorious and beautiful temple built by King Solomon—offered a picture and a type of redemption, Jesus Christ came and gave us the real thing, redeeming us from sin, reconciling us back to the Father, and giving us access to God’s throne of grace for every need we have (Hebrews 4:16).

#### **CHOOSE LIFE!**

God’s chosen people—called, protected, delivered, and miraculously provided for—ended up spending 40 years wandering in the wilderness through a lack of faith and trust in God. The whole generation that came out of Egypt, with the exception of two individuals, Joshua and Caleb, who held fast their faith in God, perished in the wilderness and never saw their promised inheritance. While even in its worst disobedience and wandering, this people of God was still protected by the blood covenant that God had made with Abraham, for a whole generation it was not permitted to embrace the blessing of the Promised Land.

When, at the end of that wandering, a new generation stood at the portal of destiny, God offered them a choice between life and death, blessing and cursing. Understand, they were living under the blood covenant that God had made with Abraham, and His desire for them was for blessing and life. All they needed to do was obey His Word.

I want to encourage you to take time to review the blessings, delineated in Deuteronomy 28:2–14, that the blood covenant ensured for the people of Israel, because those same blessings are yours through the blood of the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus Christ. They include fruitfulness, abundance, health, success in all

you put your hand to, and the establishment of your life as holy unto God.

Likewise, by actively standing upon the blood of Jesus Christ, you are free from the curses that God warned in the remainder of Deuteronomy 28 that the children of Israel would face if their hearts weren’t wholly given to follow and obey Him.

As Moses hands the reigns of leadership over to Joshua, who would go on to lead the children of Israel into their inheritance, he issues a challenge that echoes down to us today:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

In choosing life, the children of Israel were saying yes to the blood covenant established by God through Abraham. The blood of Jesus is at the very foundation of that covenant and is, in fact, what gives it power.

Likewise, when you said yes to Jesus and took Him as Savior and Lord, you were saying yes to life, yes to blessing, and yes to all the abundance that God created humanity to enjoy. While sin brought the curse, the blood of Jesus Christ destroyed that curse, giving you the choice, like the children of Israel had, to abandon the curse and declare “Yes!” to the blessing.

Apostle Paul tells us that all the promises of God are “Yes” and “Amen” for us in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). His Blood, the Blood of the new covenant, gives us adoption into God’s family, grants us absolute access to God’s very presence, and makes us heirs of the promises God gave to Abraham and to the nation of Israel.

# Read Through the New Testament

Reading the Bible is one of the most essential parts of your day-to-day walk with God. Daily use of this convenient, weekday reading plan, designed for Monday through Friday, will help draw you closer to God, develop a closer relationship with Him, and allow His Word to become alive in every area of your life.

*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

—John 8:31-32, NIV

## THE NEW TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,

TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL GREEK: AND WITH THE FOREIGN TRANSLATIONS DILIGENTLY COMPARED AND REVISED,  
BY HIS MAJESTY'S SPECIAL COMMAND.

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>BOOK/CHAPTER</u>
Wednesday	September 1	Ephesians 6
Thursday	September 2	Philippians 1
Friday	September 3	Philippians 2
Monday	September 6	Philippians 3
Tuesday	September 7	Philippians 4
Wednesday	September 8	Colossians 1
Thursday	September 9	Colossians 2
Friday	September 10	Colossians 3
Monday	September 13	Colossians 4
Tuesday	September 14	1 Thessalonians 1
Wednesday	September 15	1 Thessalonians 2
Thursday	September 16	1 Thessalonians 3
Friday	September 17	1 Thessalonians 4
Monday	September 20	1 Thessalonians 5
Tuesday	September 21	2 Thessalonians 1
Wednesday	September 22	2 Thessalonians 2
Thursday	September 23	2 Thessalonians 3
Friday	September 24	1 Timothy 1
Monday	September 27	1 Timothy 2
Tuesday	September 28	1 Timothy 3
Wednesday	September 29	1 Timothy 4
Thursday	September 30	1 Timothy 5

## D E V O T I O N

If this thing doesn't  
come out right, don't  
worry about me. I'm  
just going on higher.

*I will lead blind Israel down a new path, guiding them along an unfamiliar way. I will brighten the darkness before them and smooth out the road ahead of them. Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them.*

ISAIAH 42:16, *New Living Translation*

## A Confident Faith In God

From his early childhood, Michael Anderson had already begun to chart his career path. He knew he wanted a career in space travel. If a fixation on his first toy airplane, a gift from his Air Force dad, was not enough to make his desire apparent to those around him, there were other signs. Like, for instance, the fact that Anderson committed to memory the names of the American astronauts. Or that he fashioned moon homes for his sister to house her Barbie dolls.

"I was always fascinated by science-fiction shows, shows like *Star Trek* and *Lost in Space*," Lt. Col. Michael Anderson would confess years later during an interview. "Going out of your house and looking up and seeing jets fly by, that seemed like another very exciting thing to do. So I knew I wanted to fly airplanes...I always had a natural interest in science...I thought being an astronaut would be the perfect job."

The 43-year-old African American also knew being an astronaut, and facing the unknown, was risky. But as a strong Christian, Anderson always committed that part of his work to his faith in God. Anderson had alluded to those risks when talking with his father shortly before the space shuttle Columbia went into outer space in January 2003.

"I know I have everything right with my Savior," Anderson had said. The astronaut had also told his pastor: "If this thing doesn't come out right, don't worry about me. I'm just going on higher."

When the space shuttle Columbia broke apart over Texas on February 1, 2003, just minutes before it was scheduled to land in Florida, Anderson and his six companions were killed.

Proverbs 3:5-6 encourages us to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart...In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

In realizing his dream, Anderson had also gained a keen sense that God was always watching over him. A strong, confident faith in God will cause you to go places others would never venture to go.

By Ronald C. Jordan

# Keeping Watch

## Over Your Words

"I can't believe I said that. What could I have been thinking? I just should have kept my mouth shut!"

Ever been there?

I know I have—more than once, in fact.

I've opened my mouth and said something to someone, only to realize seconds after those words were released that I shouldn't have said it. By then, of course, it was too late. If they were harsh words, they had already cut. Sharper even, than the sharpest of knives. The damage had been done, and someone's feelings had been hurt.



“That's how God

desires for us to

use our words. He

wants our words

to be “seasoned”

so that they bring

out the best.”

Now I had to figure out a way to repair it.

The problem with that, though, is there really is no way to repair the damage done by ill-spoken words. Once they're out there, they're released to do whatever they were intended to do. And in most cases, there's not a thing anyone can do about it.

### Words Perform Their Job

If you've ever been caught in such a situation, then you know how difficult that can be. The truth is, words, once released, cannot be pulled back. And though those on the receiving end of hurtful things spoken to or about them can forgive harsh words, it's not so easy to forget them.

I suppose that's why the Bible tells us to guard our words and make sure what we say to people builds them up and edifies them rather, than tear them down.

Colossians 4:6 tells us, "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Do you see that?

Our words are to always be "seasoned" with salt.

Why do you suppose the writer used salt in this particular analogy?

Now, I know salt can be used for a number of different things, but in this case, I feel certain the comparison is being made in connection with how salt is used in food and cooking.

Before any seasoning is added, food can taste very bland. In fact, some foods have hardly any taste at all. But sprinkle in just the right amount of salt, and presto, just like that, you've got yourself one tasty dish.

In other words, salt adds much needed flavor.

And that's exactly what our words should be doing. They should be adding much needed flavor, which I translate as encouragement or edification, every time we release them.

The Message translation of verse 6 says it this way: "Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out."

That's how God desires for us to use our words. He wants our words to be "seasoned" so that they bring out the best.

You see, words that are carefully planned and spoken with good intentions can do wonders in a person's life. But say something mean or unkind, or speak out of anger, and before you've taken time to



**A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.**

**Proverbs 15:1**



examine your words, and you could have World War III on your hands.

Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." What is a soft answer? It's one not spoken in haste or given off the top of one's head. It's an answer given only after you've taken time to think about what you're going to say. It's an answer that's given AFTER you've asked yourself: "Will what I'm about to say help or hurt?"

If it's going to help, then go for it. By the Holy Spirit, let the words fly. And then thank God that you were able to encourage someone and lift them to a higher place in life. But if your words are going to be cutting, or if you know you're about to cause someone to become angry, offended, or hurt, then just don't say anything! Remember that old saying, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

### The Untamable Tongue

No one can tame the tongue.

That's what most people think, because that's what the Bible says in James 3:7-12, *NLT*, about the tongue and our ability to take control over it:

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It

Guard your words just like you  
guard your life, your family, your  
personal possessions.



is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

Reading those words for exactly what they say, it's easy to see how anyone could come away thinking, *If that's the case, I can never be sure of saying the right thing. If I can't control what I say, then why bother?*

But that's really not quite what is implied by that scripture. And, yes, you can control your words. We just read in Colossians 4:6 where Jesus said, "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt..." remember?

So, how do you control your words? How can you be sure that every time you open your mouth, you're going to speak good things and not bad?

Jesus said in John 14:10, *NLT*, "The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does

his work through me."

There's your answer.

You do exactly what Jesus did. Say what God tells you to say. Nothing more, nothing less.

Remember when God told Moses to go down to Egypt and tell the Israelites he was sent by God to deliver them? Moses was so unsure the people would listen to him, and one of the reasons was because of his inability to speak well. He thought he would have trouble getting God's message over to the people.

Look at what Moses said to the Lord, and how God responded in Exodus 4:10-12:

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

Moses may not have had the right words to say, and he certainly didn't want to say the wrong thing. But God surely knew what to say, and He was more than willing to put those words in the vessel He had designated to deliver His people.

The Lord told Moses, "You just go, and let Me do the talking."

That's really what Jesus is saying to us today when He says, "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt..." He's saying, "Guard your words just like you guard your life, your family, your personal possessions." He wants us to take the time to study our words so we don't offend or say something wrong.

Is that such a hard thing to do? It is if you're not really concerned about the feelings of others. Otherwise, you'll do whatever is necessary to guard your tongue and make sure whatever is said is profitable.

James 3:5, *The Message*, says, "A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!"

The words coming out of your mouth have a purpose. They will either build up, or they will tear down. How are your words performing today? Are they accomplishing good or bad, helping or hurting?



# Insight

By Henry Fernandez

## Receive the Blessing!

In difficult economic times such as we're facing today, it's refreshing to see so many of God's people walking in His fullness. Not only are they hearing the Word preached, but they are putting it into practice in their lives. They're obeying and trusting God to meet their needs and desires. And they are receiving His blessing.

That's how it should be for every child of God, because it's what God desires for His people (John 10:10). It's His will for us to prosper in every area of life, beginning with our spirit, soul and body (3 John 2).

Receiving the blessing of God is not a difficult thing when your life is centered on Him and His Word. Here are three things you can do to position yourself to always live in the blessing of the Lord.

The Bible says in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." That's your first step. When you honor God, putting Him before anyone and anything else, you get His attention. He already knows what you need and desire, but He wants you to love Him with all your heart, to believe and trust Him so that you seek Him and not man for those things. When you do that, then He promises that "all these things shall be added unto you" (verse 33).

Next, learn to develop a hunger for God. Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." When you are passionate about God, you will experience His blessing to the extent that you become completely whole, fulfilled and totally satisfied.

Is it possible to have all of what God has ordained for you and still have more added? Of course it is. God said in Malachi 3:10: "...and prove me now herewith... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." That's what's referred to as "abundant blessing."

Third, never forget to bless God. David declared in Psalm 103:2, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits." It is very important that you bless God for all He has done, and will continue to do for you. Too often, people get excited about what the Lord has done for them, but they forget to take time and bless Him—to say "Thank You, Lord" in a way that represents true love, reverent worship and gratefulness.

God desires that you live a blessed and prosperous life. Making Him the center and top priority of your life will help position you to receive His many blessings.



Receiving  
the bless-  
ing of God is  
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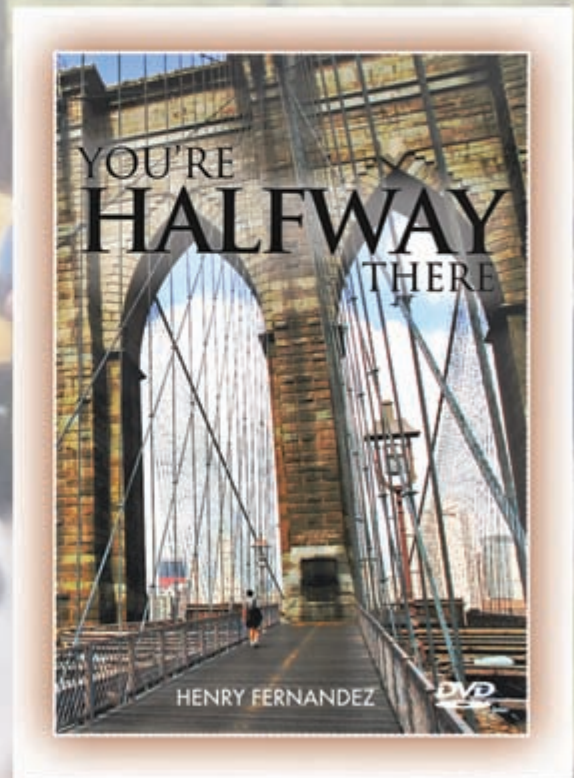
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# Don't Quit Now... You're Halfway There!

Life is much like running in a race. A goal line has been established, and we're all faced with the challenge to rush toward the finish line. Sadly, although everyone is in the competition, not everyone endures to the end. Halfway through the race, trouble comes, disappointment and weariness set in—the challenge becomes more than we can bear and we give up. We drop out of the race.

No one has ever won a race by quitting at the halfway mark. The goal is to reach the finish line. And in this thought-provoking message by Henry Fernandez, you'll be challenged to resist the urge to give up—to quit halfway through the race. You'll discover that it's much easier to keep pressing, to fight the good fight of faith, and finish your course than it is to retreat and go back.

You're halfway there! Now, let God take you the rest of the way!



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