

The Narrow Path

A dramatic landscape featuring a narrow, rocky path that leads to a bright, glowing light source, possibly a sun or moon, set against a dark, stormy sky. The path is flanked by steep, rocky cliffs. The overall mood is one of hope and guidance.

NARROW IS THE PATH TO LIFE

BROAD
IS THE WAY
TO DESTRUCTION.

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Chapter One: God is Love

There are many reasons people say God is love, and many ideas are misconstrued saying that God is love because He is loving toward another. This idea is NOT the reason why God is Love. The reason why this is important is because to know why God is love gives us a clear picture of the God we serve and why He loves us. God in His nature, in His being or make up I should say is Love. Love comes from Him automatically whether He is alone or whether He is with His Son or the Human race, God is Love and Love is the epitome of His character.

Let's look at Nature.

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for **GOD HATH SHOW IT TO THEM**. For **the invisible things** of him from the creation of the world **are clearly seen**, being **understood by the things that are made**, *even* his eternal power and **Godhead(DIVINE CHARACTER)** ; so that they are without excuse:" Romans 1:19-20

God tells us that His own power and character is revealed by Nature itself. The thing that God made reveals or manifests who He is and what He is like. Psalm 19 also indicates this.

"The **heavens declare the glory of God**; and **the firmament sheweth his handywork**. Day unto day **uttereth speech**, and night unto **night sheweth knowledge**. **There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.**" Psalm 19:1-3

God shows us that the sky reveals His Glory or Power and the earth and the things on it reveals His works, also that creation speaks to us and shows us knowledge of God.

Now not only does nature shows us who God is, but if we analyze nature closely we also can see that God takes care of nature through the order He has set up in the earth.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee; and **thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.**" Psalm 145:15-16

God takes care of everything and provides for their livelihood. There is many messages to learn we will soon see the number one thing that reveals love from the essence of God.

First, let's see How God reveals Himself. In Exodus 33:18-19, Moses asked to see Gods glory, and when the back of Jesus was shown to Him He declares His Father to Moses by saying this to him:

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and **proclaimed (Declared) the name of the LORD.** And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed (Declared), The LORD, **The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,** and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation.*" Exodus 34:5-7

The glory Moses asked to see was declared to him and manifested by the revealing of His character. Just like what creation does if we look at it with a heart searching for God. If we pay attention we will see LOVE which pours from God's being onto His Son then onto His creation.

The #1 method in which God reveals His character to us is by His Son.

"No man hath seen God at any time; **the only begotten Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, **he hath declared him.**" John 1:18

This verse in John tells us that no one can see God except His Son, Who declares or proclaims Him to the world. This proves to us that Moses did not see God himself but His Son which revealed His Father's character to Moses and also to us by creation. Let's see another text in support of this.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; **neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.**" **Matthew 11:27**

This verse also shows that no one knows the Father except the Son and he to whomsoever the Son reveals the Father. These verses indicate that Jesus is the number one way our Father in heaven is revealed. In John 14:8-9, we have an example of Philip asking to see the Father and Jesus says to Him if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. This point is very clear.

John 14:10 also shows that God is IN Jesus, giving Him the words to speak and also doing the miracles. Paul states:

"To wit, that **God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:19

As Jesus was on this earth, God was connecting the world to Himself. The question now is: How were we reconciled to God?

"For God so loved the world, that **he gave his only begotten Son**, that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish**, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Christ took away our sin by dying on the cross which was the ultimate manifestation of God's Love for a world of enemies toward God. We ought to meditate on this love daily and realize that God loved us so much He did not even withhold His only Son whom He Loved dearly. The ultimate manifestation of Gods character was also

revealed in Jesus as He walked on the earth and also as He is working to redeem us today. Let us acknowledge God for the Love that He is, and His Son as the revealer of that Love to the world.

Chapter Two: The Sinner's Need For Christ

There are many ideas and concerns pertaining to salvation. One of the major problems that hinder the Christian from having total victory is self-confidence. Self-confidence in the Christian walk is actually counter productive to the inward work of Christ. I think there is a lack of belief in what the condition that humanity truly possesses.

What is the condition of humanity?

"As it is written, There is none righteous, **no, not one.**" Romans 3:10

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in **sin** did my mother conceive me."
Psalms 51:5

Scripture states that there is NONE that is righteous on this earth and also that we are BORN with the propensity to sin. Our hearts and minds have been in this condition since birth. Let's see proof of this in scripture.

"The **heart** is deceitful above all **things**, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9

Our heart deceives us to an extent that we don't understand how wicked it really is. The scriptures ask a rhetorical question saying, "*Who can know it?*" Scripture teaches that it is impossible to change our condition. Jeremiah states:

"Can the **Ethiopian** change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23

There are many who try to be saved by of their own merits, or even try to obey by their own strength, but the bible reveals that our attempts to obey are as filthy rags in Isaiah 64:6.

We—as a species—are incapable of obeying God.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7

So how did humanity come to be in this condition?

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" Romans 5:12

This verse and many others in the same chapter, indicate that the father of the human race has hereditarily passed down the sinful condition due to his own actions and, in turn, created a race prone to sin in which leads to eternal death.

Many neglect to realize that our condition is a horrible one. It's also permanent unless we acknowledge our state and are changed by God. We are in need of being created again. We are born in sin and nothing can change this destructive state, unless we are BORN AGAIN. Only the individual who knows their need can receive Help and more than help but can be created into the image of God.

One day Jesus disciple asks, "*Who then can be saved?*" Jesus responded "*With men this is impossible...*" This may at first be a hit of discouragement, but it is necessary to reveal our true condition. It is completely impossible with men to be saved, but in the remainder of His statement, Christ gives hope by saying, "*but with God all things are possible.*" (Matthew 19:25-26)

The hope we find in Christ is truly hope because of the impossibility to do it ourselves. By our own strength, power, or even our own understanding or wisdom, we are INCAPABLE of becoming righteous or even being saved. Jesus confirms this in another passage. Jesus declares:

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING." John 5:15

We have comfort in scripture in this promise: *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Philippians 4:13)

The only way we can fully rely on God is to fully believe that we cannot do ANYTHING to achieve heaven. Our duty is to surrender ourselves and OUR FAITH ALONE will allow GOD to empower us and fulfill the promises He has desired to fulfill in our lives.

This is the same problem of the Laodicean Church in Revelation. It reveals this:

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; AND KNOWEST NOT that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17

If we would just acknowledge our condition and repent, confess, surrender, and, most of all, believe in the truth about our need for help, wonderful and powerful things can happen sooner than later. Join me in allowing God to do this in our lives that we may finish the work and lighten the earth with HIS glory.

Chapter Three: Repentance

There are many misunderstandings about repentance. Many have an idea which is holding them back from truly turning from sin and surrendering to Christ. So without wasting time, let's go into the study.

The word repent means, "**to think differently**".

So God asks us, before we receive forgiveness, to repent or think differently.

So what are we to think differently about?

"Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38

We ought to repent or think differently about our sins. Here is another verse:

"**Repent ye** therefore, and be converted, **that your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" Acts 3:19

It's thinking differently about sin that causes conversion. In your mind it causes you to make a decision to give yourself to God.

So is it you that chooses to repent?

The better question is: Are we able to think differently about sin on our own?

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but **I am carnal, sold under sin**." Romans 7:14

We are carnal; this is the state we are in. David says we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. (Psalm 51:5)

So can a person in that state think differently about sin?

"For **to be carnally minded is death**; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:6-8

The answer is NO, we cannot repent on our own, nor is God asking us to repent before we receive Him. Jesus declares:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**" Matthew 11:28

Heavy laden with what? Galatians 5:1

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith **Christ hath made us free**, and **be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.**" Galatians 5:1

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. ...But now **being made free from sin**, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Romans 6:18, 22

We were enslaved by sin and sin was a heavy burden to carry. Christ came to free us from that burden or yoke. Our minds were not capable to think other than what our sinful nature dictated. It is impossible without God to repent or think differently about sin.

It is a great deception that many think they can achieve repentance by themselves and then God can remove their sin. In this thought, they actually they keep their sins

on them because they never allow God to change their view about sin. **THIS IS WHY MANY CONTINUE TO FALL TO THE SAME SIN.**

As the song says,

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

It is Christ that grants us repentance. It is a gift. Power from God's Spirit is necessary to think about sin the way God does. It is God's thoughts about sin He is desiring to share with us. We need to believe in this, that we are unable to accomplish ANY aspect of our salvation process. We cannot assist God or Christ in giving us our salvation.

From the very beginning of our transformation—from the very first thought we had of God—it was all supplied by God Himself.

"Looking unto **Jesus the author and finisher of our faith**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" Philippians 1:6

Christ is the Author—which in the original Greek means *leader* or *captain*. Christ is the captain and perfecter of our Faith. From the beginning to the end it is Christ. From the beginning of our walk with God, even to the maturing of our Faith, it is ONLY CHRIST causing us to change even our thoughts.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17

How do we know when we are truly repentant?

There is a change in thinking toward the thing that is done against God. Naturally you cherish and love sin, it is pleasurable. When Christ changes you, sin becomes detestable to the point that you feel ashamed for the things you have done to God. Not that you feel depressed and want to curl up in the corner and hide from God, but a different type of sorrow for your wicked state. The scriptures say:

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

An understanding of our condition and what sin TRULY is will cause us to be drawn to repentance. Lots of times our guilt leads us to make an outward form of repentance but the sin always happens again because the mind has not changed. The thinking has not changed, so the person is still the same unforgiven man, many times not knowing he has not given up his sin to God.

"And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2

We cannot repent, we have to cry to God knowing our condition and approach him IN our condition and ask God to remove ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS and to cause us to HATE SIN. The word of God clearly condemns sin. So if His word is in your heart, then how can you still love sin? David proclaims in the Psalms:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11

He also says in Psalm 139:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
Psalm 139:23-24

We ought to acknowledge our state and come to Him to grant us repentance. In doing so, we would be asking for His Spirit. It is only the indwelling of His Spirit that can change the mind and heart to desire new things.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezekiel 36:26-27

It is God who gives you a new mind to think differently, and a new heart to hate sin. It is His Spirit that will CAUSE you to obey Him and convert. All we must do is acknowledge our state and approach God the way Paul did in Romans.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24

God will see when we believe He is the only one to give us this change and He will give it to us, because He promised it to us. It is God who gives repentance.

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if **God peradventure will give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth;" 2 Timothy 2:25

It is also God who can choose not to give repentance as well.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made **partakers of the Holy Ghost**, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Hebrews 6:4-6

Let us see our condition, let us also see our help and let us approach the throne of grace. By faith through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us ask God to grant us

repentance and give us a new view on sin. With this faith transformation comes and Gods power is manifested. So in the words of Peter:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, **that your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord"
Acts 3:19

Chapter Four: Confession

This aspect of our walk towards Christ goes hand in hand with repentance. It's extremely important to understand what constitutes a confession to God. We cannot approach God in just any given way. That's why, in His mercy and loving-kindness, He reveals to us what is right, good, and acceptable to Him in order for us to learn and be saved. It is not God's will that any man perish but that all may be saved.

Salvation is very specific. It is God's plan to save and His ways and methods must be followed. We cannot tell Him how we should be saved; He has to enlighten us on how He has planned to save us. First comes repentance, which was mentioned in the previous chapter, and then a confession can happen.

The word *confess* in the Greek means: **"To acknowledge or to agree fully"**. This meaning must be applied and understood to experience true forgiveness, freedom, and rest from the burden of sin.

What are we "to acknowledge or to fully agree" with? Well, the Scriptures state in John...

"And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" John 16:8

There are many functions of the Spirit of God, but one main duty of the Spirit, concerning our transformation, is convicting and reproofing us of sin. While in a state of sin, our minds are not capable of acknowledging our error alone, without God's Spirit revealing it to us. It says in Romans:

"For **to be carnally minded is death**; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7-8

"For we know that the law is spiritual: **but I am carnal, sold under sin.**" Romans 7:14

We can conclude that, due to our carnal state, we cannot change our thoughts from loving and desiring sinful things to loving and desiring heavenly things, without first being reproofed by the Spirit of God.

When, through the working of the Spirit of God, our mind starts to recognize our condition and the harm that our sins have caused—not only our own lives but also to God Himself—we will feel the sorrow of repentance. Confession follows afterwards.

"For **godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation** not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

Our minds must confirm what is revealed by the Spirit, and we confess or fully agree with the Spirit's diagnosis of our condition. Then and only then can we relate to David when he states...

"The LORD (YHWH) is nigh unto them that are of a **broken heart**; and saveth such as be of a **contrite spirit** (Mind)." Psalm 34:18

When we have truly repented and confirmed the reproofing of the Spirit by fully agreeing that we are in sin and in need of help, this revelation is what causes our hearts to break and our minds to be made low. Then our confession of THE HEART

will be heard by Our Heavenly Father. Without this sincere approach there cannot truly be a forgiveness of sin.

When spreading the gospel, we ought to understand the formula that our Father has made plain: That many will find true joy and freedom from sin and pain it brings. If we agree with the Spirit, and give true confession unto God, we can agree with David when in the Psalms he writes:

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah." Psalm 32:5

And we can also hold on to this promise:

"If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:19

Chapter Five: Consecration

Consecration is a topic that's not really touched on. Many are not sure what it means. Not only will we speak on what it is, we will learn how to do it. This is very important, and something we ought to apply to our lives in the very beginning of our walk. There are many things individuals do not know about it, and many are sincerely deceived. Let's find out what it means that we may truly be consecrated for our Father in Heaven. **Consecration** in Hebrew means to separate for sacred use; this is also the meaning in the 1828 Webster's dictionary.

So what does Consecration mean to us? We ought to separate ourselves from a worldly and sinful lifestyle and dedicate ourselves to God FULLY.

Now what does that mean? Do we change our actions to mimic Christ, should we stop certain actions to create an outward form of godliness? Is this possible? Well, our first concern is whether or not this is possible. So what does the bible say? Well, in Matthew it states:

"When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, **Who then can be saved?** But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, **with men this is impossible;** but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:25-26

Notice how Jesus wanted them to understand that man's ability to change or even obtain salvation on our own merits is absolutely IMPOSSIBLE. There are many today who try to consecrate themselves to God, thinking their own actions, or change of actions, qualifies them for holiness. Let's see what Jesus says about those types of individuals.

*"This people draweth nigh unto me **with their mouth,** and **honoureth me with their lips;** but **their heart is far from me.**"* Matthew 15:8 (Also taken from Isaiah 29:13)

Jesus also says:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for **ye make clean the outside** of the cup and of the platter, **but within they are full of extortion and excess.** Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matthew 23:25-28

The bible is clear, consecration can not be done by mere change of outward actions or outward dress or anything outward. It is an inward dedication to Our Father that He requires of us. Let's first solidify this point before we move on. Many would say,

Well, isn't there some action we ought to do to work with Christ in our consecration?
The answer is no. It is His righteousness and His ways that He alone can place in us.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64:6

Our own righteousness means nothing to God when it comes to receiving His righteousness or salvation. The reason is because our sins have already disqualified us. The following verses should without a doubt show that our actions can neither do nor add nothing toward our own righteousness or salvation.

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" Ephesians 2:1

"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Isaiah 1:5-6

"The heart is deceitful above **all** things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23

Consecration is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart. Only Christ can separate us from the uncleanness or our sin. Our separation from the world and sin is not a mere outward separation. It is an inward separation; we ought to separate our hearts and

minds from the wickedness that keeps us from becoming one with our Heavenly Father and His Son.

I thought we can't do anything to consecrate ourselves? This is correct, but there is one thing, and only one thing, that is asked of us to do.

"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with ALL your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

It is only when we have surrendered our WHOLE heart and search for Him with our WHOLE heart that He will reveal Himself to us and recreates us and truly consecrates us for holiness. There are many more passages in Scripture that reveal this truth.

"Trust in the LORD with ALL thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In ALL thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." Proverbs 3:5-7

The requirement for Christ to dwell in you completely is for you to give Him **ALL** of your being, your mind, your strength, your passion, literally **ALL OF YOU** and in turn Christ will give you **ALL OF HIMSELF**.

Most individuals think when Christ says keep my commandments, it means for you to use your strength to follow His laws. This is a great deception. Scripture reveals that the purpose of the law is for us to be brought to the understanding God's love and that by beholding our Father's Character in His law we become changed. Notice what Jesus says to a person who is a student of the law.

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** He said unto him, **What is written in the law?** How readeest thou?" Luke 10:25-26

The lawyer asked about eternal life and Christ referred him to the law, which, if we stopped reading, we would say that is contradictory, since we can't keep or follow any law of ourselves to get eternal life. But look and see what the lawyer perceived while reading and studying the law of God.

"And he answering said, Thou shalt **LOVE the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart**, and with **ALL thy soul**, and with **ALL thy strength**, and with **ALL thy mind**; and **thy neighbor as thyself**. And he said unto him, **Thou hast answered right**: these do and thou shall live." Luke 10:27-28

Notice how Christ Himself confirmed His understanding of the law to be correct by saying, "**Thou hast answered right**." Our consecration is surrendering our mind, heart, soul, and strength to Him and then He will cleanse us from **ALL** sin and unrighteousness and will give us His righteousness **and set us apart exclusively for Holiness**.

Everything has to be given up in order to be with Christ, anything less is a false relationship and false salvation.

"So likewise, whosoever he is of you that forsakes not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:33

Are you Christ's disciple? Have you forsaken all of self? And have surrendered all to Jesus? If not, I beseech you brethren, **CONSECRATE** yourselves unto the Father, and allow Christ to be king of you heart and mind, and claim the promise in 1 John, which reads:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God**." 1 John 3:9

Chapter Six: Faith and Acceptance

This next part of the study will be on faith and acceptance. I will break down both concepts to reveal how they fit together. Many use the term faith for many things but fail to actually understanding what they are claiming. This is very important because this understanding or misunderstanding is the source of all victory or all downfall. Lets start by going to the chapter everyone should be familiar with, Hebrews 11

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Before we move on I want to bring some clarity to the language a little. The word *hope* in this definition of faith is not the same meaning as the word *hope* we use in our everyday conversations. The way we use it now, we use it to refer to a positive attitude about something, wanting or desiring something to happen but it's not definite. The Greek word for hope in this verse is *elpidzo* which means, “expectation or trust”. Two totally different meanings. It is best that we make sure we use words correctly because it can change the whole meaning of the verse and alter a belief.

Back to the verse, “The substance of things hoped for (expected).” The word *substance* in the Greek means *confidence* or *assurance*. Then it says, “The evidence of things not seen.” The word *evidence* in the Greek means *proof*. So let's recite the verse with the definitions of the words in the sentence.

“Now faith is the confidence of things expected, the proof of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1

In faith there is not only confidence, there is also expectation of what is to come, also this faith is proof of things not seen showing that faith is visible in order to prove what is not visible.

If Faith includes expectation, what are we to be expecting?

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Hebrews 6:17-19

Our Heavenly Father, wanting to show us that He will not lie and will do what He promises, made an oath. Knowing it is our Father who made this oath gives us confidence. Because our Father does not lie, we can expect Him to make His promises to us happen. God also confirms this idea in Jeremiah.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11

We see here that our Father is telling His thoughts are always good to us, to benefit us and to give an expected end or future. If we trust and believe and walk in His way, Our future is expected. We can have confidence in that future because we have confidence in the one making the promise.

I understand the future but what about now?

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:3-4

Our faith in the future should be set but there are many promises made to us to give us victory. In the verses here, Peter is telling us that Divine Power has been given to us to help us receive Life and Godliness and by the PROMISES God has made to us we can inherit His DIVINE NATURE.

Wow, this is definitely a privilege and an honor to be given His nature by faith and trust in what He promises. We need more trust, when God said something and calls us something we are those things the very moment we believe. Trust in Him and your faith will not only change your heart and mind but will also transform the outside too. One of the statements in the definition of faith is that it is the "EVIDENCE (proof) of things not seen". You become this visible evidence that the world can see. Our trust in God and His promises gives us access to His transforming and creating power, and creates us into a new creature in Christ. People will not only see a difference in our lives, they start to recognize power and glory coming from our lives, our words, and our actions. (Matthew 5:16)

Now, what about acceptance?

Many people think That God needs to accept us. This is an incorrect assumption. God has already accepted us. He gave us the terms: In exchange for the life which comes from Me, give me your heart, mind, and soul. So the offer is on the table and the acceptance comes with taking the offer. The actual issue is the acceptance of God and His word. Many claim to have Faith but have not accepted our Father as their God and His Son as their Lord.

It is sad that God reveals Himself as Love and Compassion and offers gifts to escape the corruption of this world and offers freedom from sin, but we say these gifts are too great for us, and we reject them. There is also a false humility, which hinders people from accepting the gifts because they feel they don't deserve them or such things only belong to Christ and not us. An example of this is with Peter.

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, what I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." John 13:6-10

Here is an example of Jesus offering Peter something and because Peter did not understand why, He was about to reject Jesus offer. Jesus replies, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Jesus was making it clear: Whatever I offer you is for your benefit and if you reject it, it leaves you without hope. Accepting Christ and His Spirit and ALL that He has to offer makes us heirs to the promises that are made. Many are on the boarder of rejecting many blessing and even life eternal because rather than search to understand what Christ offers, we reject because of our lack of understanding.

Let us have trust in Gods Promises and Let us Accept the gifts that is being not offered but shared with us through Christ that we may receive life abundantly on this earth and life eternal.

"Therefore it is of **faith** that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the **faith** of Abraham; who is the father of us all." (Romans 4:16)

Chapter Seven: Test of Discipleship

There is a lot of assumption when people hear the term *discipleship*. Many assume you must be in a specific church or have specific beliefs in order to be a disciple of Christ. The truth is, we are not merely disciples of men, but disciples of Christ Himself. Many are looking at men and judging them by the wrong standards. There is literally one way to test whether we ourselves and others are true disciples of our Lord. We will examine this idea to understand how to truly determine who is a disciple of Christ with a test from scripture.

First, we will see what **does not** constitute a disciple of Christ. Does a person have to be in a specific denomination or church to be a disciple of Christ? Scripture says the

church is not a church because its organized on earth, but because it is organized in heaven.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24

This church is written in heaven, where even the angels are part of the congregation. If we would understand church as it is according to the scriptures, many would not be puffed up about the denomination or religious sect they belong to, or feel as if a particular denomination is the door to salvation or an access to blessing.

If an earthly religious organization is not the door to the church or salvation, then what is? Jesus answers this question in John when He says:

"Then said Jesus unto them again, verily, verily, I say unto you, **I am the door** of the sheep." John 10:7

Jesus is the door by which the sheep enter in, meaning that it is through Jesus that the people can enter into the church written in heaven. If Jesus dwells in you, you have found the door. It was never intended for you to be a member of a group or denomination for you to be made a disciple of Christ. The early church made this mistake, as well as did the Jews. Sadly, at this current time, many churches are making the same mistake, saying, "If you are not a MEMBER of my church, then you are in the wrong church." The only one who has the right to say this is Christ. Christ Himself endorsed people from other groups. Let's look at some examples.

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And OTHER sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." John 10:15-16

This verse reveals that Christ lays down His life for the sheep, and OTHER sheep He has, referring to people in other groups that have opened their hearts to God. He also said that He will bring them and they will hear His voice or word. It mentions that there will be only ONE FOLD. God's people are written in heaven, yet there are many genuine people searching for Christ among the religious groups of this earth. Christ will prepare their hearts to receive His word at the appointed time and when they do they will join together with others on earth whose names are written in heaven.

There are principles which support this idea, as well as principles which destroy the idea that a denomination is an indicator of whether or not you are a disciple of Christ. There is also another example in scripture, which shows that there is not a specific denomination to which you must belong if you want to be a disciple of Christ.

"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, **Forbid him not:** for he that is not against us is for us." Luke 9:49-50

We see clearly here that though people were casting out demons by faith in Jesus' name, the disciples told them NOT to do that because they are not following THEM or apart of their group. Jesus here says, "FORBID HIM NOT" and then says that if they were not AGAINST Him and his disciples, then they were for them. So, if someone is in a different group or denomination, but you see that they have the FAITH OF JESUS, then you are on the same path together as followers of Jesus. Let us not get puffed up because we are part of an earthly group that we feel is special.

Next, let's consider whether or not everyone is required to have the same understanding of scriptural things as proof of our discipleship to Christ. Many churches and religious groups make the mistake of pushing for agreement on a set of major points, and otherwise threaten with exclusion. They create a set of beliefs or creeds of ideas or teachings, and hold it up as a standard to tell if you are a disciple of Christ. They say, "If you don't believe this, then you are not a part of God's church."

This is a lie from Satan to develop in the people a character of ostracizing people and casting judgment on individuals. There is no doctrine or truth that is the way into the church of Christ besides the truth about God. Every other teaching is secondary, as far as evidence for your discipleship of Christ is concerned. Let's check scripture to back this up.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." John 7:17-18

Here we see the prerequisite of knowing truth, and that is to be doing the Father's will. To give yourself to God, He will open your mind to truth no matter where it's coming from. If someone does not know or understand certain truths, it does not mean they are not doing the will of the Father. Many people have died not knowing certain truths and even perpetuating error, but their hearts and minds were open to the will of God. Elijah felt a discouraging way about Israel during their apostasy when King Ahab was in power. But look at what God said about this in Romans chapter 11:

"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Romans 11:2-5

Elijah looks at the horrible things being done in the midst of Israel and makes a statement as if they are ALL lost, but God tells him that there are still some who have not given themselves over to error. People may be unsure or confused. Some even follow error due to it being tradition, but their minds and hearts are ready for the truth when it's delivered to them. There are many today who look at other people in different denominations and, based on their personal organization's statement of

beliefs, pronounce them guilty of wickedness and declare them separate or enemies of God. This is not true; they may simply need to be educated in the ways of God. Those with the truth should be the conduit in which truth is delivered. (Galatians 6:1-2)

What then determines whether you are a true disciple of Christ? Something happens to us when we come in contact with God. Let's examine a portion of Ezekiel chapter 36 which states:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezekiel 36:25-27

When we come in contact with the one true God, He removes our guilt then replaces our mind and heart with a new mind and heart which is not a slave to the sinful nature. Then, afterwards, He puts His Spirit IN US and CAUSES us to live as Christ lives, which is naturally in accordance to His law.

This is our experience at our transformation. Did you hear anything about an earthly denomination or organization, or anything about doctrine? Only one demand is mentioned which is to remove idols and worship the true God, which is the will of God for all. You then have a new guide in you, one that will lead you into all truth, or true doctrine. (John 16:13) And as far as the church goes, you are now counted as a part of the heavenly church. All those who partake of this transformation on earth will be drawn together by Christ manifesting the heavenly church on earth.

As we surrender daily, our hearts and minds will be prone to follow the Spirit's leading. As people approach us, they can see by the life we live, whether or not we have come in contact with Jesus. Then, when truth comes, it is truly received by the ones surrendered to Christ leading through the scripture. Many will reject truth, but

they are actually rejecting the Spirit's guiding and teaching. The characteristic of a true disciple is in Galatians chapter 5.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Galatians 5:22-25

The test to see if someone is a true disciple is the fruit of that which is inside you. If you have the Spirit of Christ in you, these characteristics will manifest. Others will see love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, in every detail of our lives. How we speak, how we act or respond, how we think, and even how we feel. This is why daily self-examination has to occur to make sure we are not moving Christ to the side and performing our own Character.

One of the things I have learned about the fruit of the Spirit, is that they are all nouns. If they were verbs it would be actions God is requiring you to perform. To perform love or to perform patience is not what God requires, rather to BE love and to BE these characteristics is what God desires for us. We have to acknowledge the gift being given to us. Our old mind and heart causes us to have death, but now we are receiving Life and all that which causes death is gone and we are made new. When we look at each other, do we see a new life, a new heart, or do we see anger, hate, or even jealousy one toward another?

The true test of discipleship, to know truly if we are disciples of Christ, is to see that Christ is living in us and to see Him LIVING THROUGH US. Let us all fall to our knees calling on our Father to cleanse us, transform us, and give us His Spirit that we may not only manifest Christ in our lives, but also glorify our heavenly Father on this earth. Let us claim the promise in 2 Corinthians which says:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old **things are** passed away; behold, **all things are become new.**" 2 Corinthians 5:17

Fourth Angels



Learning Center

