

The High Cost of Maintaining Your Identity

Written by Clay Sikes

Friday, 01 January 2010 00:00

(TRUE PROSPERITY IS BIRTHED IN OUR DEATH)

A Call To Discipleship

The Word of Faith movement has done a great job of teaching us of our entitlements in Christ, but conversely done little to explain the true cost of discipleship. A 'sold out' man or woman of God is a 'surrendered' saint; one who is not living for his glory, but rather for the glory of the one who sent him. His purpose in God is not a focus on entitlements, but rather a focus on his assigned purpose in the earth – his destiny in God! A man of true destiny will seek to 'Be' rather than a man who seeks to 'Do'. In 'being' who God has called you to be you will always 'do' what God called you to do because the greater always includes the lesser. The Word of Faith message has centered us upon "who we are in Christ", contrasted with 'The Surrender' message which is knowing 'who he is in us'. Contrary to popular Church opinion God is not about improving us, He is about removing us. God is indeed looking for a few dead men!

Let us awaken to the fact that our journey here on earth is not about us, but rather to glorify the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the creator of heaven and earth; and in so doing, we, those of us who are willing to sell out completely, will walk in every entitlement the Lord can give (**Matthew 6:33**). We must look unto the "narrow way", the way traveled by the few, not the "wide path" traveled by the multitudes. The way of true surrender and death to self will separate the few from the many, because "many are called, yet few are chosen".

Let us fall in love with our God; let us be willing to die for the one who died for us, for our surrender, our death will produce His life through us and glorify God in the earth.

In every circumstance of life we are faced with decisions, which ultimately determine the outcome of those circumstances. While God has ministered much to us about death to self during the last ten years, only recently have we begun to understand the extraordinary life that is produced in our death and complete surrender to God (**John 12:24**). What I submit to you here is that there is a decision we can make in almost every situation we face, especially critical ones, that will automatically bring God on the scene and into our specific situations. While there are many biblical examples of identity surrender, none is greater than Jesus who completely surrendered his identity for God's ultimate purpose on earth (**Philippians 2:5-8**). To willingly surrender our identity in the circumstances of life has but a single requirement – our death. Our death produces His life, the abundant life that Jesus speaks of in **John 10:10**. Will this death to self come easily? No! Will we be tested repeatedly and often unexpectedly in our commitment to walk this way? Absolutely!

Understanding The Words "All Things"

As you read this chapter it is important to remember that God orders the steps of righteous men and God-ordered steps have God-ordered goals. It is important to remember that '**all things**' in our life work together for our good if we are called for His purpose (**Romans 8:28**). This chapter brings focus to the fact that our trials, persecutions, failures, and difficulties are part of God's design to release His glory through our life (**Acts 14:22**). Our mistakes and failures are often the catalyst to great successes. It is also important to remember that what the devil means for harm, God will use for our good. Our all-knowing God is in '**all things**;' He is the God of the Universe, the ultimate Commander-in-Chief. **All things** are of Him, through Him, and to Him for His glory (**Romans 11:36**). It is particularly important to embrace the fact that this scripture does not say 'some things'; it says "all things" are of God. It challenges our religious minds to accept that God is the God of "all things". Begin to recognize the interrelationship and connectivity between the words "all things" in Romans 8:28 and "all things" in Romans 11:36 – "All things are of God and working together for our good if we are called for His purposes. It is extremely important to recognize that God will use even that which appears destructive in our life, to be turned around for

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a greater and higher purpose.

If we accept the fact that we are known by God and predestined to fulfill His purpose upon the earth (**Romans 8:28-39**), coupled with the fact that our steps are ordered with a God-ordered goal in mind, then can we begin to see God in **ALL THINGS** in our lives; and subsequently become less willing to judge good and evil based on 'outward appearances' (**Isaiah 11:3**; **I Corinthians 10:7**; **Romans 8:15**). *'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face danger all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in ALL THINGS we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us' (Romans 8:35-37)*. Again we see those important words "All Things". We are promised victory over 'all things' that we will ever face in this life. Seeing God in 'all things' means that God has a message, he has specific instruction, He has revelation, He has a plan in 'all things' and by seeing (seeking) Him in 'all things', He reveals His purpose (**Romans 8:28**). Oh boy! This was tuff on my theology!

The purpose of this chapter is to extricate us from the curse of living from the fruit of the Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil. Let me say in advance that the challenge of this teaching will be to see God in 'all things', equaled by the difficult task of not judging "good and evil" from the mind of the flesh (**John 8:15**). As mentioned, there is a righteous judgment that God allows, but only in the event that we are led of the Holy Spirit in that judgment (**John 5:30**). We will talk more about this later in the Chapter.

This message has changed my life in dramatic ways; initially I did not accept it, yet it drew me into its truth from one phrase in an Arthur Burt tape written on a desk calendar in early 1998: the phrase was, "You must lose your identity to gain God's". As I pondered this quote for almost three years I finally felt convicted to search it out and find its relevance in my life. *"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings" (Proverbs 25:2)*.

As children we were trained to think rationally, evaluate mentally and take an action accordingly, and always to make decisions from the arena of logic and reason. As adults the indoctrination continues as our education process teaches us to draw all conclusions from the mental realm. As our mind develops so too do our built-in defense mechanisms. In most instances our natural inclination in this process is to protect our turf, stand up for our rights, take a position and gain an IDENTITY. Turf can simply be our traditions, our point of view, our way of doing things, the way we project ourselves to others, what we stand for, what we own or what we think we own. Turf is territory – that which we deem as ours; that which requires us to have a self appointed identity! If you have turf to protect, you also have an identity to protect. Self-given, self-appointed identities are deeply rooted in pride; and that which is born of pride will surely fall in a man or woman of God who has a God-appointed destiny. We spend years building our identity as we enlarge our turf.

Turf! Secretaries fight over it, gangs kill over it, bureaucracies battle over it, countries war over it, individuals guard it, and even pastors protect their turf...and yes we, you and I, also naturally protect our turf. This protection has one specific mandate; maintain your identity – the specifics of who you are and what you stand for. Identity, the image we present, is our seemingly strongest protection against turf invasion. We also call this phenomenon territorialism, keeping up with the Jones, maintaining an image, keeping up a front, all of which require often-unreasonable ideals such as standing your ground, fighting to maintain your point, an eye for an eye, and doing whatever is necessary no matter the cost. My first bold statement in this teaching is, **"When we struggle to maintain any identity other than our God appointed identity, we are really struggling with God!"**

If you are presently experiencing a loss of turf, take heart, you are probably in the center of God's

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will. There is a dissolution process now taking place with many Christians, which for the most part has been grossly misunderstood. Since the bulk of our present day Church doctrine is built around "getting my stuff", any reflection of decrease or diminishment in one's life is left without explanation. Wrong doctrine will shipwreck your life when chaos ensues: Said differently, enough fire will separate false doctrine from truth! For those who are experiencing these trials, be encouraged, God must empty us of ourselves before He can truly replace us with Him, and in many cases, He must empty us of our things in order to replace them with His things. God won't always give us what we want, but He will always give us what we need, and yes we, you and I, sometime need losses to find (His) gains.

Some will not experience the surrendered life until they have reached the end of their natural lives and some will not experience it at all; but for those who have ears to hear what the Spirit of God is saying, be aware, God is doing something mighty in your life, but you must know it and embrace it for the fruit to come forth from it. God is not the God of decrease, He is the God of increase; but often He must dismantle us and our doctrines in order to rebuild us much like Joseph, Moses, Abraham, and Paul.

God is doing something in this hour and it involves a true identity crisis – the clashing of wills; God's will versus man's will. **Whenever we seek to maintain our identity in a given situation, we are a direct threat to God's glory. The glory of God cannot appear in places in which men get glory by enforcing their strong identity or need to be recognized. To walk conformed to the image of God demands that I lose my image.** It is not our natural tendency to shrink back and not defend, to the contrary, we want to be heard, to be seen, to make a name for ourselves, to be thought well of, to protect our rights, to insure that our needs are taken care of, that our point of view dominates, yet God is saying something important to us in this hour; "SURRENDER YOURS AND GAIN MINE!" Some have suffered devastating events in life; events that have destroyed pride, taken identities – all seemingly horrible situations. Again, rejoice! Your life is about to be used for his glory.

The circumstances in life that call for the greatest levels of 'MY IDENTITY' are precisely the areas in which God's glory is cut off. It is far better to have an identity in heaven than to have one on earth. Identity in Heaven is not only futuristically eternal, but in the present as well, because heaven identifies with acts of selflessness (**Psalm 14:2; Psalm 85:11-13**). When we live to glorify God in the earth we produce light that can be seen by heaven.

Trials often come by fire; and fire deals with the 'what' and reveals the naked 'why.' As has often been said, **Circumstances do not make the man; they simply reveal him to himself.** Often in life we have sought to maintain our self appointed identity in given situations. It has been our understanding and orientation to life to always protect our turf. Perhaps like you, I have faced many of life's situations in which I have thrust my identity into the middle of a crisis; and, inevitably the results were not good. Yet, what I now see is that as I continue to escape the burning need to have an identity, or even to defend myself, I am seeing the glory of God in unprecedented ways. No flesh can glory in His presence. God shames the wise with the foolish, and the mighty with the weak, so that no flesh will glory in His presence (**I Corinthians 1:27-29**).

The events of life in which I must maintain a strong 'identity' are precisely the areas in which God cannot be glorified in, AND REVEALINGLY, the precise areas of my greatest pride. Remember, God-ordered steps have a God-ordered goal and often His God-ordered goal is to reveal areas (in me) that need to be put to death, areas of pride, areas of ego, areas of self appointed identity. God will use circumstance upon circumstance to expose pride in our hearts – our judgments, insecurities, and selfish motives. Circumstances in life that call for our strong identity are often no more than God-ordered events that test the true nature of our character. Recognizing the test, as such is important, but of even greater importance is what we do when our character flaws are

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revealed. Do we ignore them or do we embrace them?

I must lose my identity (my pride) for the glory to appear. Is this easy? Is this natural to man? Absolutely not! Can I accomplish this on my own? Absolutely not! In order for me to decrease, I must humble myself before God for His grace to enable me (**James 4:6**), otherwise I fail miserably because God resists the proud. The only way this surrendered life can remain alive in us on a continual basis is to stay bowed and humble before the Lord, to acknowledge our weakness and inability, and to come as a little child for the Father's help. John-the-Baptist said, *"I must decrease that He might increase"*. *"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whoso ever shall lose his life shall preserve it"* (**Luke 17:33**). *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"* (**Psalm 116:15**). When we chose to die to ourselves, we become "precious" in God's eyes, a grace comes, and with that grace a peace that passes understanding.

When we empty ourselves of self, it opens the void to be filled with God: This is the point in which we commit to only do what God puts in our hearts to do, and only say what God puts in our hearts to say – this is the life of those who live from The Tree Of Life, this is the life of the second Adam (**John 5:30**) *"Of my own self, I can do nothing..."*. Those that are led by the Spirit of God are the true sons of God; they know the Lord as "Abba Father", they trust Him implicitly and come to Him as little children (**Romans 8:14,15**). We all need a true identity crisis; one in which we come to recognize that maintaining our strong identity in any circumstance circumvents the power, authority, and glory of God in that circumstance.

TRUE FREEDOM IN GOD OCCURS WHEN WE GET FREE OF OURSELVES, when we for the first time recognize that our death produces His life. *"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it die it brings forth much fruit"* – Death produces fruit (**John 12:24**). The key is to recognize that our surrender (death) produces His abundant life (fruit) in us (**John 10:10**). *"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (**Matthew 10:39**).

When we WILLINGLY SURRENDER our image (identity), the image of God appears in us. When we surrender our rights in a situation and accept our spiritual responsibility not to judge it or people that may be involved, a spontaneous miracle occurs: God is now in our midst, and His presence releases His power and glory. His power and glory destroys all yokes and bondages of the enemy and releases His blessing – *"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it"*. When we refuse to eat from the wrong tree, which we do when we refuse to judge, we automatically entitle ourselves to partake of the right tree – The Tree Of Life. The fruit of this tree is **grace to hear the Father**, to receive His anointing, His enabling, and His favor.

Is it not the purpose of God that we should be conformed to His image? *"Let us make man in OUR IMAGE; after our likeness"* (**Genesis 1:26**). Get a revelation of the fact that God made us in His image, but in order for that to be, WE MUST LOSE OUR IMAGE. We have a call on our lives to be conformed to the image of the Son, but such a call demands that I lose my image. *"You shall not make for yourself any graven images."* We all have an image of ourselves that we have created from the vanity of our own minds, in the blindness of our own pride. If I am going to conform to the image of the Son, I must lose the image I have created for myself – I'm cute, I'm beautiful, I'm smart, I'm a good businessman, I'm an educated man, I'm a good preacher, I'm a sharp dresser, I'm a wonderful parent. These things, in and of themselves, are not wrong UNLESS we let our image of them replace the image God desires for us – true humility is the governing factor, our true brokenness and submission to the Father.

Before leaving this subject, I think it important to relate to the images and ideas we impart to our children, which often and unwittingly come from the influence of the world. As parents, we have a distinct responsibility to rear our children in the image of God, not the image of the world. When

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we place images within our children, even in their adult lives, that are distinctly NOT from God, what level of fire must come one day to correct what we as parents have created for our own sons and daughters. Our pride, as parents, is our number one enemy as it relates to our children, because children will not always do what you say but they will always do what you do. A phenomenon of leadership, and specifically our leadership as parents, is that we will always produce fruit that looks like us. It may manifest in a different form, but it will manifest! *"Be not deceived for God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, so shall he reap."* Three key words can spare our children much pain; *"Be not deceived..."* If we sow pride, if we sow anger, if we sow manipulation, if we sow arrogance, if we sow high-mindedness...whatever we sow, we will be sure to reap.

The Church Has Reached The Prophetic Hour Of Restoration

Amos 9:11-15 "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord, who will do these things. "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God."

God is the God of RESTORATION and God's restoration is exponential: RESTORATION is a result of God's power and glory appearing. What is being seen in this environment is that our death produces life in many areas other than the single circumstance in which our death was required – Our willingness to die, to remain without an identity in given situations releases a supernatural power that brings restoration in many different facets of our lives.

We are in the hour of RESTORATION; an hour in which God is building His life, blessing, and glory into the earth through His people. As has often been said, "sometimes the best way up is down" and RESTORATION is coming to those who are willing to die to themselves, to lose their identity, to lose their image IN ORDER that the glory and image of God can appear. Again, our death (rest) in a single situation can and will release the restorative power of God in multiple areas of our lives. All restoration is preceded by rest, and true rest is the place where we have quit grumbling and complaining, where we rest content in the Lord no matter the circumstances of life! *"Godliness with contentment is great gain."*

As restoration comes to the Church so too will a great separation between the carnal and spiritual seed. Just as Ishmael taunted and ridiculed Isaac, so too will the carnal antagonize the spiritual – Think it not a strange thing! We are approaching a time in which Ishmael cannot live in the same house with Isaac – this spiritual phenomenon has global as well as local and personal implications as God continues to separate the carnal from the spiritual within us.

Glory: God Gives It And God Demands It

John 17:21-22 "...Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me."

The glory that God gives men is from the Greek word **Doxa**, which means the presence of God, the blessing of God. Yes, there is a glory that God freely gives His people. The glory that God reserves for Himself is from the word **Kabhad**, which literally means the glory that God demands

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for Himself (**Isaiah 42:8**). **God will share the *Doxa* as long as He gets the *Kabhod***. An example that most of us can relate to is the *doxa* that comes or doesn't come into our Sunday worship services. No place is *doxa* more **evidently determined** than in Church pulpits and praise and worship services. In those places of worship in which worship leaders and ministers seek their own glory the true presence of God cannot be found; chill bumps and entertaining emotionalism yes, but no real evidence of God's Spirit and Power. The best of our flesh is our worst enemy. However, in those places in which man's only desire is to worship and glorify God, His presence is strongly felt and observed, and His power released.

Will It Work At Work?

Monday's work is just as much a proving ground as Sunday's service – God is still looking to be glorified. If we are working as unto ourselves, then our dependence will totally be upon what we can do and what we can produce; however, if our work is specifically appointed by God and done as unto the Lord and for His glory, He will show up as will His power, glory, presence, and provision. Since my ministry is in the business field, let me address some parallel points from a Christian spiritual perspective. These principles have application in any God-appointed Christian endeavor. When we are (God's) purpose minded, we will not have to chase money – this is a major Kingdom principle. God pays for what He orders.

First and foremost God is in the people business, not the money business. As such, every business transaction must be approached with a priority on people, not money. As we seek God about the people involved, often He will assign a role that we are to play in the lives of those we are involved with. As we now stand in the gap for the people as the Lord leads, we are simultaneously enacting our faith because **"faith works by love and faith comes by hearing"**. When the love of God is operating in us for the people, our ability to hear is magnified. "Faith comes by hearing"; now, the priority of God and the will of God are all working together and WE WILL HEAR GOD with specific direction. Why? Because faith works by love and faith comes by hearing (**Hebrews 11:1**); faith comes by having heard God **and no other way**. How can one have faith for what he hasn't heard? God will speak directionally when our business priorities are aligned with His priorities, which is His love for His people SAVED AND UNSAVED ALIKE. Business done for the glory (*kabhod*) of God will produce the glory (*doxa*) of God in the lives of those being directed by God.

Ministry that is done to the glory of men will not share in God's glory (*doxa*). Let us examine a single popular teaching in the Church today: Real *Kabhod* and *Doxa* are nowhere to be found with many who teach, preach and participate in what the Church world calls "the prosperity message". Man is getting all the glory man can achieve for himself through this diabolical system; a system similar to what we see in corporate America – bigger buildings, larger and faster planes, bigger houses, bigger salaries and bank accounts, while the people gasp for financial life! This one-sided man induced doctrine will soon be exposed for what it is – FRAUD IN THE NAME OF GOD! God will not share His glory with men who seek their own.

The very essence of the prosperity message is selfishness and self-centredness – it is all about 'me' and what 'I' want and leaves little room for God. When we desire 'things' more than God, we are creating our own form of idolatry. Promises like "give to my good ground ministry and get all of your needs met" saturate Christian television and radio. It artfully uses scripture to base its message, but if the message is truly understood one can see that it leaves little room for the glory of God. As previously mentioned, in the hours following my monumental financial failure I cried out to God "Why?" He would only answer "my mercy!" What I now realize these years later is that the motive in my giving was not to the glory of God, it was to my glory – this is the fruit of a man inspired World System, man glorifying man; and indeed men are glorified but as with all systems

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of men, ONLY ONE SIDE TRULY WINS WHILE THE OTHER SUFFERS.

Recent history has revealed a plague of employee retirement accounts being wiped out in some of America's largest and supposedly successful corporations, yet CEO's and former CEO's have socked away millions in stock sales with little to no regard for the people that once were the backbone of their empire. As sad as this may seem, the prosperity message runs a similar path inspired by greed and self-glory while packaged as 'the work of God'. The Bride has been raped, and to some extent prostituted by men who have taught us to serve God for the money he will provide.

Only when we are living our God-appointed destiny and true God-appointed purpose can we bring glory to God. Anything less is the glory of man brought on by the efforts of man. When we yield to and strive for the glory we can achieve for ourselves, we are only seeing the best of our flesh. When we forgo our best and only move by the Spirit, we begin to see the emerging life of God that ultimately brings glory to God. In only doing the things that God appoints can we produce *Kabod*; and almost simultaneously God provides the *Doxa*.

The Best Of Our Flesh Is The Worst Of It

This new life demands surrender; complete and total surrender to never again go back to trusting the flesh. Arthur Burt whose heavy impression on me influences this teaching states, "The best of your flesh is the worst of it: the best YOU CAN DO is an enemy to God". **THE SUBTLY OF THE THINGS YOU DO WELL ARE THE VERY THINGS YOU MUST BE CAREFUL OF.** It is not our raging flesh, our bitter disagreements, fights and quarrels, or lusty behavior that we put any trust in – we know flesh when we see it! Or do we? The best of our flesh is the worst of it, not the worst of our flesh, but the best of it! The 'good things' we do naturally is the enemy of the best, and the best is God, and the enemy of God is 'our good' – our ability to preach, our good deeds, our musical talent, our wonderful compassion, our natural abilities, our good heart, our great education or professional skills. There is nothing good in us except God: Our righteousness is as filthy rags. Our good, if not led by God's Spirit, is dangerous because it is the birthplace of pride. The same pride that puffs up the raucous rock singer, though packaged differently, also stirs in and among us as we pride ourselves in our ability to preach and teach – the proud look, the strutting and theatrics are eerily similar. How subtle is our pride, the enemy of God, to park itself in God's own house.

Pride evolves when our good works replace God's appointed task. We are given to pride when we do good things on our own: what real danger evolves when self-righteous pride arises – "We have just built a gorgeous new sanctuary, our sound system is state of the art, our preaching and teaching really moves people, I helped widow Jones get to Church this morning, we give to missions, we are leaders in our church". As stated, we are not likely to trust in our drunkenness, anger, hate, envy or bitterness; those are obviously what they are, works of the flesh, but **danger lurks when we trust in our good works!** It is here again that we visit the Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good and Evil, except here we face the greatest danger of all – judging our good as God! **How often does the Church confuse good with God?**

God desires to give us His blessing, but this blessing can only come as we render ourselves dead and only move by the Spirit. Our death releases His life, His blessing, His abundance, His protection, and His anointing – a spontaneous God-filled life.

Our "old man" fallen Adamic nature thrust us under the spell of The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil even though we have been appointed to live from the Tree of Life, but how many of us really do? God has annulled the curse of living from the wrong tree through the atonement, whereby the two are brought back together as one. Originally, Adam simply heard and obeyed

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God, which resulted in his every need being met, but at his fall one turned into two – the Knowledge of Good and the Knowledge of Evil. We too are under that spell – we see life divided into two – good and evil! We judge everything as one or the other INSTEAD OF SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING! When my businesses collapsed in late 1997, I could only see it as bad and judged it as such; perhaps I didn't have enough faith, if I had given more money, prayed more, fasted more or worked harder. Had I known then what I now know, my burden would have been much lighter for I would have known that what appeared to be for my harm was actually working for my good. The results of this tumultuous time in my life have been extraordinary. I wouldn't trade the relationship I have with my God or the truth that He has allowed me to see, for all the success those businesses could have obtained, which came as a direct result of the difficulties I faced. There is no physical gold that can replace the true gold that God gives as a result of our time in the fire!

We must come to a place where we see (seek) God in all things – poverty, wealth, good days, bad days, sickness, and health. When we chose to see God in all things, there will be no such thing as good and evil. We will not see things as good and evil – It is all God! When we get to the point FINALLY, where we judge NOTHING as good or bad unless God appoints us to do so (**John 5:30**), but rather see it as all God, then we begin to realize it is not about us, but just simply 'what God is doing in us, or what God is saying to us'; such is the privilege of those who partake of the Tree Of Life. God is in everything in my life. WHEN I SEE ME (MY CONCERNS) IN THE CIRCUMSTANCE, I'M NOT SEEING GOD (WHAT GOD IS SAYING); when the circumstance rules, I'm not seeing God; I am seeing my point of view through my judgment of the situation. When we truly LOSE our identity, we will quit seeing ourselves in the circumstances, and instead see God in it, and more importantly what God may be saying to us through the circumstance.

We tend to (carnally) see things divided into TWO PARTS; this is good, this is bad, I'm rich, I'm poor, I'm in, I'm out, I'm up, I'm down; but finally, to see God (spiritually) in all things, not some things, not in half, BUT IN ALL THINGS, **THEN** God is able to reveal things to me that need changing in me. It is at this point that I am able to embrace everything that I don't want and don't like, and more importantly, I'm not willing to leave it UNTIL I have embraced it! We must be willing to stand in the pain of the question until the truth of our heart can be revealed. Truth, ugly truth has to be embraced! For example, when I see someone misbehaving, God would rather me see 'my judgment' of the person rather than the person's bad behavior, because 'God is in all things'. If I accept that God is in *all things* in my life and I am free from judging "good and evil", then God is free to allow me to see a true reflection of my heart in the situation. To do this I must lose my identity and gain God's. I must escape my normal good/bad evaluation to truly hear what God is saying. In denouncing the good/bad mindset, I invite the Spirit of God to instruct and guide me (**Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 32:8**), because now I am partaking of the Tree of Life; now I am freed from the curse of The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good and Evil.

As stated, "ugly truth must be embraced!" When I embrace it, I own it. I don't own it to stop in it!" says Arthur Burt, *"I own it to disown it!" "I CANNOT DISOWN IT UNTIL I OWN IT."* I cannot lose something about myself UNTIL I am able to acknowledge it is there! As long as I live from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, I will fail to be able to own it, therefore it will be impossible for me to disown it – this is why many people cannot find deliverance. Those who constantly blame other people, other circumstances, other situations for the pain in their life will never see the freedom and joy deliverance brings! Today, like many others, I am faced with situations that in the natural seem very negative. It would be easy to tag them as "bad", but God speaks to me and says, "Allow the heat from these situations to mold and **change you**". What I am realizing in these situations, as negative as they are, is that it is not about good or bad, it is about change IN ME, change that I need to embrace.

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A Religious Mind Will Nullify One's Ability To See God In All Things

We frustrate the grace of God when we don't see God in all things. I blame the devil, I blame man, I blame my wife, the government, and circumstances and thereby limit my progress because I am not seeing God in ALL THINGS. As stated, we tend to only see God in the good, which makes us only see half, not the whole of what God is doing. When we view things this way, we frustrate the grace that could be ours and limit our own growth. A pure heart will see God in all things. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"*. When we are failing to see God in all things we have relegated ourselves to the curse of the Tree of Knowledge, a place in which we judge based on what we see and hear. This curse demands that I make my own decisions, looking to 'me' for answers and judgments – I have become like God because I judge all things for myself; I decide the direction of my life and independently make my own decisions. Anything that stands between God and us is an idol, even if that idol is us. *"Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs"* (**Jonah 2:8**). Grace is God's unmerited favor, and blessing and grace will follow those who make their decisions by the Spirit and not by the vanity of their own minds. Here is where the war is fought, escaping the mental intellectual realm and gaining spiritual understanding.

God is looking for a few dead men whose trust is not in themselves but in God alone. To these men a grace will come; an enabling grace to fulfill their purpose in the earth, for they have divorced themselves from the World's System and gained the Kingdom method of receiving – hearing and obeying the Spirit of God.

When God purposes to leave me out by allowing some failure or disappointment, **it is because He is purposing to put me in**. "Why is He leaving me out or allowing this" we ask? Because he doesn't put me in just to put me in; he puts me in for the glory of His name; and so He tests me by putting me out! If I squeal and moan and groan I reveal that the thing is still living in me, and truly I want to be in for 'my glory'; pride still has a place in me. I want to be in, not for the glory of God but for myself. When the thing is truly dead in me, I will not complain but live contented that God is doing something special in my life, and though it hurts and feels like the fires of hell, God's grace is sufficient and I am content no matter the situation.

While it is difficult to arrive at this point, we will finally come to a place where God is seen in all things and we will only judge good and evil by God's Spirit (**John 5:30**). The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil can no longer effect on our lives. Toil and strain will be replaced by simply hearing and obeying God and seeing His word manifest in all areas of life. One word from God can turn your life around. When we stop seeing things as "good and evil", we will know that we have come to the resources of The Tree Of Life; a place where we come into the presence of God, a place where we hear and obey God for His *Kabhod*, a place where He freely dispenses with His *Doxa*, a place of dominion and rule under the direct unction of the Holy Spirit.

When we refuse to see good or bad from our flesh (**John 8:15**), we will automatically reflect inward to elements and aspects of ourselves that need changing. Perhaps we were engaging the wrong system, impatient, ill prepared, overbearing, unloving, critical, or judgmental. Perhaps we were unduly angered or greedy but we can only see this reflection of ourselves IF we stop judging everything, every circumstance, and everybody as good or bad. When this work is completed in me, I will begin to see God in all things. What was unavailable to me before, can now be seen with great clarity.

What is being said here is that "to judge not is to sin not". **Isaiah 11:3** says, *"Judge not by the site of your eyes nor reprove by the hearing of your ears"*. We are simply not to judge by what we see or hear. Man has always seen "the naked" in the naked, but God sees the positive with the naked. If we are going to come in line with God, we must in line with His mind. The worse thing that has

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ever happened in this world was the murder of the Son of God; how easy that would have been to judge, and yet, "before the world was Jesus was the Lamb slain". Calvary was not a mistake of God. We must rise above our worldview of failure and judging by the outward appearance.

Mercy Triumphs over Judgment

In late 1999 the Lord began to deal with me about the relationship between mercy (not judging) and His true prosperity. As the year ended the Lord spoke the following to me:

"Wash your heart with mercy for the poor (those who have great needs), for those who oppose you, those who speak against you, those who unfairly judge you. In doing so, you will release my hand to bless you both financially and spiritually. In washing your heart, you must totally release those who have offended you, not just as an act, but also deeply in your heart. Treat them as if they have a clean slate against you. I will give you the ability to totally wash your heart of any misgivings or apprehensions, thus enabling you to avoid resentment in the present or future. Unless your forgiveness and mercy are total in nature, you will hold a deep grudge that will surface later. Your release, mercy, and forgiveness must be total. To do otherwise is short of my intended purpose and will block the flow of my blessing to you."

"Trust me in revealing to you that your mercy given, will invite my mercy for you; I will appoint blessings and mercy to you each and every time you operate in this power. My anointing will come upon you and blessings will flow, however, you must understand that I am looking at your heart and your motive must be MY WAY (The Kingdom's Way). Your motive cannot be to get a blessing."

"Your trust for MY WAY will continue to grow. Evidences and testimony will soon be revealed as a result of your recent actions of extending mercy. Realize the difference between your mercy, which is conditional, and my mercy, which is unconditional. It takes my power to extend my mercy – ask for it and you shall receive it by faith and remember I am looking at your heart."

"Recognize that there is a definite relationship between giving mercy and needs being met in your life. My hand is often moved by the willingness of my people to extend mercy and, conversely, it is stopped when my people judge and condemn (even in their heart). Also, recognize the relationship between the areas of your needs, and the areas I am requiring your mercy in. As with my word, debt released releases debt, debt unreleased produces debt. Understand MY WAY (get a revelation) of relational mercy. When you need money, have mercy on those who owe you money, when you need love, have mercy on those who you think owe you love, when you need understanding, have mercy on those who do not give you understanding. I say again, understand the relationship between mercy given in a particular area and My mercy given you in the same area. You will grow spiritually and materially in an enormous way as you operate in this power."

The above word has sent me on a journey to understand the depth of its meaning, and though I feel I have only scratched the surface, I am truly beginning to see a relationship between mercy (lack of judgment on my part) and prosperity. It is important to remember and understand John 5:30 as you seek God for a deeper revelation of the tie between mercy and prosperity. There is a righteous judgment that can only come from the Holy Spirit, as opposed to the natural judgment that most of us make from the carnality of our own minds.

God will permit failure, whether it is physical, financial, professional, personal, spiritual, or whatever; God will permit it, even ordain it, and if He permits it, **IT MUST BE FOR HIS GLORY!** *"Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that WE MAY ALSO SHARE IN HIS GLORY. I CONSIDER THAT*

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OUR PRESENT SUFFERINGS ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING WITH THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US" (Romans 8:17).

My trials are producing His wisdom, His life, and His success. In God, failure and tribulation breed success if I will not judge it as bad, but rather a part of the process which leads to my salvation and deliverance. I will have to embrace the very thing that I want to get out of, but before I can get out of it, I MUST EMBRACE IT. I must come to the Father as a helpless child, acknowledging my complete and total dependence upon Him. My true humility and brokenness before the Father draws His grace, which brings the enabling (**James 4:6; Matthew 23:12**). IT IS HERE THAT THE GLORY OF GOD IS MADE MANIFEST UPON THIS EARTH, THROUGH OUR COMPLETE DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. Is it far-fetched to think that God perhaps foreordained our lives with what the world would call pathetic, difficult failure? Most of us have faced and witnessed extreme difficulty and failure. All of us have been pathetic people in one area of our life or another. The times of our greatest failures are catalysts to our greatest successes. TO THOSE WHO SUFFER GREAT FAILURE TODAY, **AWAKEN! YOU ARE BEING CHAMPIONED BY GOD! You are not a failure in God's eyes, but a chosen vessel through which the pure glory of God can flow. Recognize that you are simply in a process where there is hope and a future** (Jeremiah 29:11).

"And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10).

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

Do We Ever Have The Right To Judge?

Church doctrine is challenged by subjects like *sufferings and trials are for an ultimate purpose, not judging good and evil from our carnal nature, and seeing man's failure as a great preparation.* Often difficult messages are difficult to receive. Any truth that goes against common belief is never accepted easily. God prepared me for this and other seemingly radical messages by telling me *"Ignorance often comes disguised as tradition"*.

If we want to have "ears to hear" what the Spirit of God may be saying, it is important to realize that just because something is hard to swallow, doesn't make it wrong. We have a striking example of a hard saying from the Master in **John 6:51-66**:

*"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' Jesus therefore said unto them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.' These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them...'It is the Spirit who gives life; the **FLESH** profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.'...'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.' **AS A***

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RESULT OF THIS MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES WITHDREW, AND WERE NOT WALKING WITH HIM ANYMORE."

Because many of the disciples really didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, based upon what they interpreted in the **knowledge of their mind**, they stopped following him. They made A JUDGEMENT, and it was an erroneous one. In fact, Jesus said that their judgment was unbelief (v:64). This serves as an example of another hard saying and its application toward us when we judge from our carnal nature! This next section is dedicated to tearing away a mindset that has been built in us through many years of TRADITION.

We Can Judge Only What God Appoints Us To Judge

Some will ask, "If I can't judge, how am I to use the mind that God gave me? Am I not supposed to put on the mind of Christ, which involves discerning right from wrong?" Excellent question. We need not go further than Jesus' own words in the Gospel of John for an answer. Much scripture is used here to enlighten us to the fact that Romans 11:36 is absolutely true. As we have often said, of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, perhaps discernment is the most important in this hour is which we now live, for there are many voices in this world.

John 5:30 *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. IF I ALONE BEAR WITNESS OF MYSELF, MY TESTIMONY IS NOT TRUE."*

The abounding and resounding message from heaven to those who have ears to hear is **"I can do nothing on my own initiative"**. God is pointing us to a Spirit-led life; a life of accepting the fact we are not to move outside the boundaries of God's appointed Spiritual direction. Do we have a righteous judgment? Yes we do, **"As I hear, I judge..."** We are only to judge by what we hear; this type judgment is just in that it is the judgment that God speaks. Judging from the flesh or from our carnal nature is to partake of the Tree of Knowledge. We are strongly admonished by Jesus in **John 8:15,16** to not judge from our minds, from what we deem as good or evil – *"You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me"*.

We have all faced situations that seemed bad that actually turned out to be good and good situations that turned out to be bad. God is teaching us to see with the eye of the Spirit, which will enable us to see situations for what they really are. *"If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? **DO NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE**, but judge with righteous judgment"* (John 7:23,24).

John 12:47-50 *"And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore, the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me."*

The point of these scriptures is difficult to ignore or refute: Jesus only spoke and acted under the direction of the Father and the Holy Spirit. He did not judge ANYTHING by its appearance, or based upon His knowledge of the situation. How does our judgment relate to eating from the Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil? We directly connect ourselves to the curse of that tree IF our judgment is not through and from the Holy Spirit. A distinguishing characteristic of Jesus was that He didn't judge based upon His knowledge. Here are more scriptures to contemplate:

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Proverbs 14:12 *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."*

I may think it is good to do or say, but it is death in the end. Judgment without the Spirit of God is death.

Luke 18:19 *"And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.'"*

Luke 6:45 *"The good man brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."*

By connecting these two verses, we see that no one is good except God, so if a man is declared good by bringing forth what is good, that "good" can only come from God, can it not? And by deduction, what is considered evil is that which did not come from God, correct? So, can judgment that did not come from the Holy Spirit be God? The picture of the Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil is hopefully becoming clearer. That fruit was forbidden to be eaten, and still is forbidden fruit! And, if I may so boldly assert, that is why Jesus did not judge anything without God's direction, because it is partaking from the forbidden fruit, a poison that relegates us to a life of toil and strain (**Genesis 3:17**).

John 2:24,25 "But Jesus, on his part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man."

Galatians 6:3 "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

1 Corinthians 2:11 "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

Romans 9:14-18 "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion'. So then it does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'for this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth'. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom he desires."

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you..."

Isaiah 55:7,8 "Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts....'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways', declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.'"

Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding..."

Proverbs 2:6 "For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

James 1:5,6 "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting..."

Perhaps here are some scriptures that address the most difficult part of the teaching that God is in all things...

Jeremiah 17:9,10 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."

Job 1:8-10 "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?' So Satan

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answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.'

Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

Job 38:12 "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place?" "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?" "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hall, which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle?"

Exodus 10:1 "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants...'"

Genesis 2:5 "...for the Lord God had not caused it to rain..."

Jeremiah 12:14 "Thus says the Lord concerning all My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance with which I have endowed My people Israel, 'Behold I am about to uproot them from their land and will uproot the house of Judah from among them'."

Amos 4:7 "...and I (the Lord) caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city..."

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..."

Luke 12:7 "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Hebrews 4:12,13 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

God is involved either actively or passively in all things! We may not understand it all, but the evidence is irrefutable.

The Sovereign King

Lamentations 3:37,38 "Whose command was ever fulfilled unless the Lord decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that everything comes—both calamity and blessing?"

Those called to walk in God's Kingdom upon this earth will come to the revelation that God is in complete control. The key to a proper understanding of THE KINGDOM and its dynamics is the recognition of the complete control that God has over everything that takes place in the universe. He holds it together by His very Word. The Law and the Prophets are abundantly clear as to who it is that releases judgment and blessing. There is no precedent in the scripture leaving any room for chance, or the bringing forth of anything that God has not proclaimed.

Few would question the truth that God is good and that God blesses. Scripture is explicit as to where all good gifts (blessings) come from (**James 1:17**). *'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.'* Can our religious minds accept that God will release His judgment in the earth? This verse from Lamentations 3:37,38 clearly shows that even calamity can ultimately come from Him – *'Whose command was ever fulfilled unless the Lord decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that everything comes—both calamity and blessing?'*

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The Great Question

The question people then logically ask is: "Is God then responsible for the Calamity?" NO! WE ARE!

Genesis 3:17-24 *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

The Key Words are "He drove out the man." The first great calamity ever to take place came from the mouth of the Most High, yet it was clearly Adam who was responsible for it by disobeying the first commandment – "You shall not eat of it..." Even today we live in violation of God's first commandment by partaking of fruit from the wrong tree. Adam's banishment by God was a death sentence, yet often, like Adam, we fail to see the results of our actions and the calamity God sends our way because He loves us. Often it takes years of living by the fruit of the cursed tree and its accompanying toil and strain just to realize that we are living from the wrong tree, that we are living life on our terms and not His. Our wrong way produces God's judgment in our lives in order to 'awaken us' to a better way – The Tree Of Life. One has to look no further than the children of Israel for multitudes of examples in both biblical and modern times to understand this more fully.

It is also true that affliction can be allowed to test, prove and purify us. Our state of not being what we should or where we should be necessitates both testing and judgment. You cannot be righteous in Dallas if you are called to be holy in Cleveland (**Acts 17:24-26**). We are often victims of the inefficiencies of works done with "human hands" often in places we are not called to be. Only the afflictions brought on by our wrong efforts will cause us to focus where God is calling us to focus. Is there a better way? Yes, learn from those who have failed miserably – the Bible is full of examples.

Job – A Picture Of God's Sovereignty

To say that somehow Satan is anything more than an instrument and pawn in the hand of God is to make him out to be more than what he is...a pawn in the hand of God.

Job 1:6-12 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan*

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went out from the presence of the Lord.

We see in these verses that God is up to something. He brings up the subject of Job to Satan and plays Him like a fiddle. There is no question as to the right of God to decide whether or not calamity was to come to Job. In this case the calamity was for the sake of testing Job.

Back To Our Birthright

Total Surrender: The Key To Prosperity In God

If total surrender is the key to us living our lives in God's true prosperity, we must first understand that our surrender is conditioned upon our willingness to stop judging from our flesh. There will always be someone or something that brings offense until we begin to see God in all things. As this work in progress is completed in us, we will begin to enter a place of bringing glory to God in our lives. In order to get to this place, and thus allow God to bring me into my inheritance here on earth, something on my part must be sought: My birthright must be the ultimate goal. To seek my birthright (my destiny), I must first know where it is. My birthright, as a blood-bought human living upon this earth, is to get back to that symbolic garden to the Tree of Life; a place where I walk with God; a place where God speaks and I obey; a place where my first priority in life is to glorify Him. As Arthur Burt so aptly puts it, "Go back to the garden, the place where man made his first mistake and obey the first commandment God gave man; *"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* (**Genesis 2:17**). By refusing to eat of that tree we find ourselves in the greatest situation of all – COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. *"I can of myself do nothing"* (**John 5:30**).

"Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, OVER ALL THE EARTH and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. GOD BLESSED THEM and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. RULE..." (**Genesis 1:26-28**).

If we now know that the place of our birthright can only be found symbolically in the garden, then begs the question, how do we get there? Here lies the core of this whole teaching; it is not found in my forward motion and great successes; to the contrary, it is found as I proceed backwards, through my failures; as if we are coming back to our birthright in reverse. We're out, and God wants to bring us back in. Symbolically, God drove man out of the garden that He might bring him back in; but there is a block to our entrance to get back in – *"After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life"* (**Genesis 3:24**). Grasp this important point; there is no way back to this symbolic garden except you go through (flaming sword) the fire! As Mr. Burt says, **"There is no way back except you have a revelation that is fireproof"**. So the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is, and in the fire I get rid of my junk, my rubbish, my wood, my hay, my stubble, my pride, my desire to impress you, my desire for you to think I'm somebody, my desire to have an identity (**I Corinthians 3:12-15**).

As we work our way back into that symbolic garden, to the Tree of Life, the fire of God begins to burn, and what remains in us is **WHAT GLORIFIES GOD**. I only want (in me) GOLD that is tried by fire, and except it be tried by fire, its existence is worthless in the eyes of God. The fire destroys everything that is not gold, but your gold, that which you do to the glory of God is the only thing that can stand against this fire. Why do I do what I do? The fire deals with the "what" and reveals the naked "why," and if there is no gold there is nothing left. "What" I do in the eyes of God is not nearly as important as the "why" I am doing it!

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It is here that we build an argument with God; "I did this Lord, I did that; I went to Bible School, I am a pastor, I gave thousands of dollars, I support missionaries, I pray for the sick, I study my bible five hours a day, I get up early and pray." So what! God is saying to us. All of those things must go through the fire and only that which is done to the glory of God will stand the fire. Great ministries that enjoy the glory of men will one day stand before this great flame!

Once I have come through the fire there are only two things remaining; gold and ash and you cannot burn ash, it has already been burned, but when that which remains is gold, and when the gold touches the flaming sword which protects the Tree of Life, THE FIRE CAN DO NOTHING WITH IT! You will not walk in the cool of the garden, nor will you rule upon this earth and walk out the dominion mandate **UNTIL YOU COME WITH THE GOLD, LIVING TO THE GLORY OF GOD, HAVING BEEN TESTED BY FIRE**. I pray that what is found in me is gold that will bring me back to that initial birthright, which God foreordained for me to walk in. It is here that we will be what God purposed us initially to be; conformed to the image of God, MADE AND PURPOSED FOR HIS GLORY.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Had A Revelation That Was Fireproof

The miracle found in Daniel 3:16-18 of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was not their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace – **the greatest miracle was their acceptance of God's will, no matter the outcome**. They walked in an understanding that GOD IS IN ALL THINGS; they found no need to defend themselves, to squawk, to squeal, to fight! They accepted their fate no matter the outcome. Like the Apostles of the New Testament, their love and trust for God even in death, exceeded their love of life (**Matthew 10:39**).

Daniel 3:16-18 *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"*

Those that eat from the Tree of Life know that God is in everything and they, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, accept God's will not matter the outcome. Those still bound to the curse of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would naturally see the fiery furnace as bad. As these three men lost their identity in this crisis, God was brought on the scene: *"He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods"* (**Daniel 3:25**).

Do you want to go from glory to glory? Do you want God to appear in the midst of your situation? Look for life's daily circumstances in which your death is required. Did God intend circumstance to be glory to glory? If our steps are ordered by Him, which they are, circumstance to circumstance will become glory to glory. What we have previously described as difficult situations can become glorious testimonies unto the Lord. What was meant to be a bad day can indeed become a blessed day. Our whole attitude must change as we escape living under the curse of a tree that demands that we maintain an identity. Anything growing will change, and change we must, to step into OUR DEATH which releases HIS LIFE, which includes His blessing, anointing, power and deliverance. RESTORATION is at hand for those courageous enough to die for it!

A Final Glance At Getting Free Of The Tree

"For FROM Him and THROUGH Him and TO Him are ALL THINGS. (For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him). To Him be glory forever! Amen (so be it)." (Romans 11:36

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Amplified).

The concept of God being in "all things" in our lives is virtually a foreign concept to most of the Church. The Church neatly packs God in the box of good and the devil in the box of bad. We have assumed that God only deals in the major events of our day, yet God knows the number of hairs on our head; He knows when a sparrow falls from a tree; and upholds all things by the word of His power. He commands every caterpillar, canker worm and locust, which He once called "His great Army" which He sent among the Israelites in Joel 2:25.

God controls everything – Romans 11:36 in the KJV says, *"Of Him are all things...."* He can send the messenger of Satan to buffet us lest we should be exalted above measure; he can stop a business deal in its tracks lest our great success lead us away from our destiny; he can allow our flesh to be destroyed that our soul might be saved and our great ministry to be crushed that His true purpose might arise within us. In the past we have blamed circumstances, our parents, our spouses, our congregations, entire races of people, and the devil for our troubles, when all along it has been the Father molding and shaping us.

Again, you may ask "What about my difficulties and hardships?" How do they bring glory to God? As we have stated earlier in this teaching, only man sees our nakedness as naked, while God sees it as positive, a time of phenomenal growth – *"...it is through many hardships and tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God"* (**Acts 14:22** Amplified). The Kingdom of God is within you, and yes, your hardships and difficulties are not an accident, but rather preordained God-orchestrated circumstances designed to mold you into THE IMAGE OF GOD (**Romans 8:28-37**).

It is important here to recognize that God is giving us His mind by sharing with us His goal of HIS GLORY FILLING THE WHOLE EARTH (**Numbers 14:20; Psalm 57:5; Psalm 108:5**). *"Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order THAT WE MAY SHARE IN HIS GLORY. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"* (**Romans 8:17,18**). Our trials, our tribulations, our difficulties are not only forging the character of God within us, but also providing us with opportunities for God to be glorified by and through our actions during these very trials!

Every time we bring glory to God in this earth, the light of God's Spirit becomes brighter and brighter (**John 4:21-25**). When we begin to live our lives with the single purpose of bringing glory to God, the oil in our lamps stays plentiful and the light will stay bright. As millions of Christians come into this revelation, HIS GLORY WILL FILL THE WHOLE EARTH! For this light to stay bright within us we must die daily to ourselves that He might shine forth – our death produces His life (**John 12:24**). *"As it is written: For your sake we face death all day long, we are considered sheep to the slaughter"* (**Romans 8:36**). Paul said, "I must die daily."

When we recognize that our lives were designed with a purpose and that purpose is to bring glory to our Lord, then the requirement of our death not only becomes acceptable, but something truly to be longed for.

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (**Romans 8:22,23**). Our spiritual DNA enables us to yield, to surrender, to die, to trust to such a degree that the "old nature" to fight, to mistrust, to contend, to defend, to murmur and complain DIES WITHIN US.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made in His likeness, knitted together in our mother's womb – we have His DNA (**Psalm 139:14; James 3:9**), therefore we can do what He predestined us to be able to do. We, you and I, have been predestined and called of God to fulfill His purpose upon this

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earth. We have but a single purpose, which has many purposes. The single purpose is to bring glory to God with our lives; and once we accept this single purpose, God will provide many assignments as we begin daily to become sensitive to the mind of the Lord.

As we become sensitive to God's priority to be glorified in the earth, he unlocks the mystery of how this will happen. I submit this to you for prayer and discernment: It burns in my heart that the "how" is now being unveiled and the mystery unlocked. We, you and I, have been commissioned and foreordained by God to bring Him glory in the earth and when we make His glory our first priority by choosing to lose our identity, to lose our life, THEN the life God ordained for us, our true destiny, our true prosperity in God will emerge as the glory of God is released into the earth. The creation awaits us to step into our destiny. God controls everything upon this earth; hence all of creation is in God's command. Only man has a choice, and when he chooses to die to himself and follow God implicitly, is adoption made complete.

"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons..." (Romans 8:19-23).

Provision for my weakness, deliverance for my sin, all needs met, a place of *"I shall not want"* or need for anything; ALL THINGS are all channeled into one final revelation – the glory of God! When the glory of God is indeed a revelation within me, then and only then can I see the enemy to God's glory, which is "my glory"! Once I see the enemy of God's glory, which is my glory, my ego and pride standing in the way of God's glory, it is then that I can begin to conscientiously choose as to whether I will seek my glory or God's glory in circumstance upon circumstance in my life.

When I willingly choose to judge not, to lose my identity, to avoid self-righteous defense of my rights, I release God's glory into the earth. He gets the *kabod* (the glory He reserves for Himself), and in turn I get the *doxa*, (the glory He freely gives man) the abundance of **John 10:10**. It is at this point that we potentially go from living from circumstance to circumstance to living "from glory to glory." Our circumstances or "ordered steps" are almost daily opportunities for Him to get the glory or for me to get the glory, setting up the classic struggle between my God given humility and my man given pride.

Allowing God's Grace To Come

To cover my weakness is a frustration of the glory of God because His strength is made perfect in weakness. Do you want the perfection of the breath of God? Do you want God to be glorified? Why then do you cover your weakness? Why do you pretend that you haven't got it? Why do you hide the truth about how weak you really are, KNOWING THAT THE TRUTH, LIKE A MAGNET, BRINGS THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. Only by humbling ourselves can any of us be delivered. Humility will bring deliverance as sure as a rain cloud brings rain, yet many of us sit smug, hiding the truth about ourselves in order to protect our precious identity.

The evidence that you have chosen the Glory of God is that you will get rid of your own glory. This is where the proverbial rubber hits the road. This is not a case of talk; it is a demonstration of walk. When I'm up I will humble myself and come down; knowing in so doing I am glorifying God. To cover my weakness, I pretend it is not there, which is an insult to the glory of God. When this revelation becomes real, you will begin to humble yourself. Humility isn't a virtue; it is an obligation. We are called to walk humbly with our brothers and sisters, wives and husbands, and those about us. The measure in which you appreciate the Glory of God, which is lifting Him up, is

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the measure in which you come down. Said differently, the measure in which you appreciate the glory of God will be reflected in your willingness to die daily. Once this revelation begins to operate in you, your God-ordered steps will direct you into opportunity after opportunity. Only that which is done to the glory of God will last, all else is rubbish because every man's work will be tested of what sort it is.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil

It is important not to confuse humiliation with humility: humiliation is from the outside and humility is from the inside. Often God must bring humiliation, like the stake in a tomato plant, in order to properly direct our growth; this is not His best for us, however, He will allow it in the areas we need it. Remember the last place in which you suffered humiliation and you will find the last source of great pride in your life. For those who are "called", humiliation is God's instrument to eradicate pride, hence God's word "*Pride comes before a fall*". If we are humble, we come down gladly and willingly because we know to do so we are crowning Jesus in our hearts. ALL TRUE CHANGE IN US IS BROUGHT ON BY HUMILITY – STAYING BROKEN BEFORE GOD. When we become proud of our job, proud of our ministry, proud of our church, proud of our new home, proud of our earnings, proud of our accomplishments; pride in any area will bring a fall for our own protection and destiny, AND HIS GLORY.

Let us not be like the Christian businessman who prided himself on his earnings, the Christian parents who thought well of themselves on how well they raised their kids, the pastor who gloated over the congregation from his lofty position in the pulpit, our new cars, houses, clothes, televisions or the like: all are subject to fall.

The "What" and The "Why"

As earlier mentioned, it isn't "what" you do, it's "why" you do it. Do you do Christian things because you want people to know you are dedicated to God? Do I teach, preach, sing, play an instrument, witness, go on missions because I'm seeking something other than God's glory? The glory of God should be the very heart of everything I do.

The ultimate test of the fire is not the "what" but the "why" – its not the "what" we did, it is the "why" we did it. If the answer is not for the glory of God, the fire will burn it up. Some will say, "but my large well-known ministry, my huge new building, my tapes, my books" and the Lord will say, "Yes yours, yours indeed"! Then to some little trembling Grandmother, who hidden from everyone, prayed her entire family into the kingdom – to her the Lord will say, "Pure gold my darling; well done my good and faithful servant".

The Greater Includes The Lesser

A final point to this teaching is that we must get delivered from the Church induced mentality of coming to God to get my needs met. Two thirds of the Church is oriented to need; One third has been weaned. God is bringing a Church, a company of people into the third third, and until we come into the third third, we will never fulfill the purpose of God, and the purpose of God is that in fulfilling His purpose we are filled full. We are not filled full while we're in the two thirds: In the two thirds we have been tied to deliverance but we need delivering from deliverance – the third third brings you to a place where you are not tied to man and his need, you're tied to God and his glory, yet **the greater always includes lesser**. By moving up to the greater (bringing glory to God with my life), it always includes the lesser (my needs being met). There will be more souls saved when you don't seek to save souls; there will be more bodies healed when you get delivered from healing bodies; there will be more people blessed by your ministry when you get loosed from

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ministering to people; there will be more financial prosperity when you get loosed from chasing money. God says, "Instead of these things come and minister to me"; in other words seek Him for His guidance and specific instruction. In hearing and obeying Him you are ministering to the Lord and bringing glory to His name.

In ministering to the Lord by living your life for His glory, the Lord relates to your need. This is being offered for your consideration; for its relevance and truth – Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world to save you; He said, "*I came to do the Father's will*", and in doing the Father's will, "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son*". The greater includes the lesser. As the Son yielded himself in doing the Father's will, incidentally he saved us. Jesus died for me is true, but He wouldn't have if it hadn't been the Father's will, because He was one with the Father.

To be loosed from a "results" mentality is to gain the mind of the Father (seeking Him first), which will be the very thing that produces "all needs met" – "*The Lord is my Shepard, I shall not want*". When results are no longer important, just the Father and His will, then the results will be immeasurable. When we put our results-oriented minds on the alter and say, "God, get your glory in this arena", and truly do not care, the results will come – God will get the glory! There will be more results when you are not after them and God will be glorified in it! As we have previously said in this teaching, obedience in one area causes needs to be met in another.

The Church wants the power and blessing and there is nothing wrong with that except that it cannot be the primary motive (**Matthew 6:33**). The primary motive must be Him and His glory, and as we yield ourselves to Him and His glory, as we surrender our lives that He may be glorified, the greater includes the lesser. The Church today short-circuits itself by pursuing power, blessing, and dominion without going "OF, THROUGH, AND TO HIM". By not realizing that God is the God of "all things" the Church has placed itself under the curse of The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good and Evil – all good things are of God and all bad things are of the devil. This has been the mentality of the Church for Centuries. In recent history a man promised an impoverished nation to end pornography, poverty, joblessness, and high crime rates. He accomplished all of these things and the Church and general population accepted and applauded him – his name, Adolph Hitler. The curse of judging good and bad eliminates truth and accurate discernment from God, and often, like the Church of Germany, we are deceived into judging by outward appearance.

Part of that divine power God wants to operate through you is the empowerment not to judge good and evil. As you walk in this empowerment "not to judge" you release God's hand to judge in the very situation you refrained from judging. He will execute righteous judgment and bring justice to injustice. *He will correct those things that concern me if I will but entrust myself to the one who judges justly!* If I won't judge or try to get His glory with my own hand of correction, I will invite "*His vengeance*". When we execute judgment without God's specific direction to do so, we eliminate God's intention to intervene. Those who chose to walk this narrow path, will find life and find it more abundantly.

Obtaining: A Right And Wrong Way

As we learn to walk in the Spirit, many issues arise that shed light on life as a Spirit being; a life of living in a body with an often contentious soul (mind, will, and emotions). We constantly battle our logically thinking minds as well as the years of tradition: We battle these on a daily basis to escape into a place of being led by the Holy Spirit.

God is gracious in teaching and revealing the spiritual inertia that blocks the Spirit life and keeps us penned in the prison of our soul (the arena of logic and reason). To this extent, the Lord is bringing revelation in the area of OBTAINING. What we are beginning to see is the difference in OBTAINING on my own and RECEIVING from God. Most of us have years of training in the art of

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obtaining: obtaining love, obtaining money, obtaining respect, obtaining spiritual information; in fact, obtaining any need we may have. Since these learned methods of OBTAINING have taken years to master, we older types may have a little more difficulty in letting go of these man instituted traditions and social and psychological entrapments.

Lesson number one, as we stated earlier, the Holy Spirit is now shouting from the housetops to refocus us away from being "NEED MINDED" to becoming "PURPOSE MINDED". As I focus on God's purpose alone and follow Him by His Spirit alone, my needs are met and often met supernaturally. **When my purpose is His purpose my needs become His responsibility.** As a Type A personality this lesson has taken years to learn. God's dealing with me has been ever so severe, showing me that without Him (His direction) I no longer have the ability to do what I once routinely did with ease. This part of my life has had to constantly be put to death in order to walk this out, but take heart, if His grace can break me of this there is hope for everyone.

As God walks me deeper into this He continues to show me that when I am seeking Him first and following His leading, I am also supernaturally resisting the devil because THE GREATER ALWAYS INCLUDES THE LESSER. When I am following His leading, He also meets my needs because THE GREATER ALWAYS INCLUDES THE LESSER. As we have mentioned, much of the Church today is "NEED MINDED" with many attending Church primarily to get their needs met. Our Church leaders preach it from the pulpit, sell it on TV and tapes and have unconsciously, or perhaps in some cases consciously, led the saints to believe that church attendance will get the job done, tithing and giving will get the job done, giving into this or that "good ground" ministry will get the job done, but where is God in all these spiritually rhetorical promises? God must be first, and if He is, the needs will be met – "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness AND THEN all these things will be added".

Obtaining or getting needs met God's way is a true blessing – *"The blessing of the Lord makes (us) rich, and he adds no sorrow to it"*. For years I read this scripture in Proverbs without much understanding. The first part is easy enough to understand; "The blessing of Lord is good," but what does "adding no sorrow to it" really mean?

The following (for me) was revelation, not only about this particular scripture, but also in understanding that, IN GOD, there is a proper way to obtain (receive) and an improper way (the way of "sorrow").

Whatever way you obtain something will be the way you must maintain it.

Whatever is obtained by power must be maintained by power.

Whatever is obtained by manipulation must be maintained by manipulation.

Whatever is obtained by a lie must be maintained by a lie.

Said differently, "What ever a man sows, so shall he reap."

As you expand this principle into other areas of obtaining, it is clear to see that only that which is obtained (received) from God is worth having, whether it is money, job, respect (identity/image), spiritual understanding, even our own ambition.

As an example, let me use the ever-so-slippery and socially accepted category of ambition. In the world, ambition is looked upon with great respect; unfortunately this is also true with much of the Church. Several years ago a pastor friend of mine enthusiastically met me with a "Praise the Lord Clay, I have just received a great miracle of God"! "Great!" I replied. "What is the miracle?" He then told me that his little congregation of fifty or sixty people needed a new Church building and deserved better than the very adequate storefront building that they were presently leasing. He went on to say that the miracle was that he had found someone who was going to lend them

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\$1.2mil for a new building, new offices and classrooms, a gymnasium and other perks. My heart fell into my shoes and my countenance must have shown it as he asked me why I wasn't excited for him. What I saw was a supposed need being fueled by ambition outside of God (**Galatians 5:20,21**).

To make a long story short, the pressure on the congregation for tithes and offerings was constant to maintain payments needed to feed the beast of debt. Much of the congregation left and the building was foreclosed upon. The principle is clear; if you obtain something through your own ambition, you will have to maintain it through your own ambition – in this case it cost the pastor everything.

How much better is it when, by His grace we obtain (receive), rather than by other measures; for when we obtain it by His grace, by His grace it will be maintained, whether it be ministry, marriage, business, friends, relationships, church buildings, etc., Our NEED MINDEDNESS has short circuited God's plan for our lives, by seeking "things" first instead of God. When we do this we circumvent God's ability to get "things" to us because He will not violate His word that says to "Seek Him first and then the things will be added". He warns us in Matthew 6:32 to be not like the pagans who run after things, but rather seek Him and know that God always pays for what He orders.

Is there a sorrowful way to obtain? Indeed so, and I have a few Ishmael's to prove it, but we have moved into "the time set by the Father" and even though Ishmael (the child of the flesh) will continue to taunt Isaac (the child of promise), those chosen by God (**Matthew 24:14**) will begin to see the true meaning of God's prosperity, that of being an heir of God whose inheritance is beyond human comprehension (**Galatians 4:1-7**).