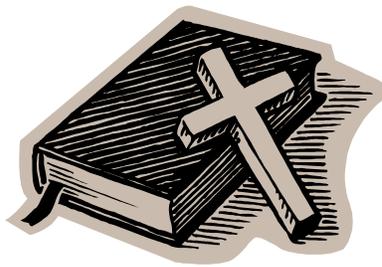


PURE CHRISTIANITY



PRE-DENOMINATIONAL BIBLICAL
PERSPECTIVES

By Rev. Dr. Steven C. Brown, D.D.

Pure Christianity Series: Volume #1

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By Rev. Dr. Steven C. Brown

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PREFACE

I have been concerned for years about the divisions in the church, but I could not seem to place my own standing among my brothers and sisters as to where I belonged. Was I a non-denominational believer or an inter-denominational believer? This truly concerned me, because when people would ask me what denomination I was, I would simply tell them that I belonged to the same denomination that Jesus Christ belonged to. This would surely cause them to look strangely at me as they tried to understand just where I fit into their understanding of acceptable places that a believer should hold.

Then just the other evening, some many years after I told the first person who asked me what denomination I belonged to, the Lord shared the proper wording with me. if a human category was indeed necessary: "*Pre-denominational*." The words rang loud and clear. When I shared this revelation with my wife, she seemed a bit taken back for the moment, and repeated "pre-denominational"? When I said, "yes" she chuckled a bit then asked, "Before denominations?" And I said, "Yes."

Before denominations, there was only One: Jesus Christ. And I still feel to this day as strongly drawn to Him, if not more, than the first time I told someone that I belong to the same denomination that Jesus belongs to and always will, for there is no other. Jesus said if we are not with Him, we are against Him:

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Matthew 12:30

A PRAYER FOR HUMILITY

“I have been too distant from You, Father,
for all too long...
and I confess this sin.
Please forgive me.

Too many things in this world have drawn me away
from You, all the while I long to be at Your feet...
a loving, admiring student.
Learning daily.

Satan be damned!
Place him in his home...the fire without ceasing.
Bring down these walls which separate you and I,
and replace them with the hedge that protects.

This wayward prodigal son has once again
traveled too far from home,
and longs for the peace found in the glow of Your hearth
and the smile of the Father rescuing His lost sheep.

Place me in the arms of the Lamb of the Lord,
safe with the Shepherd's flock.
I love You, my Lord, for You alone
are worthy of all praise and honor
and glory.

Amen”

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

“For the word of God is living and active
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit,
of both joints and marrow, and able to judge
the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
And there is no creature hidden from his sight,
but all things are open and laid bare
to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

Hebrews 4:12, 13.

“The fear of the Lord
is the beginning of wisdom;
a good understanding have all those
who do His commandments;
His praise endures forever.
Praise the Lord!
How blessed is the man who fears the Lord,
Who greatly delights
In His commandments.”

Psalm 111:10; 112:1.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom,
let him ask of God,
who gives to all generously
and without reproach,
and it will be given to him.
But he must ask in faith
without any doubting,
for the one who doubts is like
the surf of the sea,
driven and tossed by the wind.”

James 1:5-7.



BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.
Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made
known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever
is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good
repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,
dwell on these things.”

Philippians 4:4-8 NASB

A LETTER TO YOU FROM GOD:

If you died today, do you know where you would go? Would you go to heaven or to hell? There is only one way to Me, and that is through My Son: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes unto the Father but through me.’” (John 14:6)

Are you sorry for some of the things you have done in your life? You can be forgiven. (Acts 10:43; Colossians 1:12-14.) Is there something missing in your life? That emptiness can be filled. (Mark 10:27)

I do love you. I love you just the way you are right now, and I hear you. I look upon you now and see your sins, but once you take My Son into your life, all I will see is the purifying blood that Jesus shed upon the cross for you. Your salvation was bought at a price. The price was Jesus’ life, one which He gladly gave up for you. (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7)

Ask Jesus into your life today! You have until your dying breath, but you can also be gone in the twinkling of an eye. When Jesus was crucified, there were two other men crucified with Him. One asked the Lord into his life, and the other refused your Savior. The man who refused Jesus was also refused admission into Heaven, but the penitent sinner was guaranteed a place in heaven. Personally guaranteed by Jesus, Himself! Don’t you want to know that you have a place waiting for you?

You don’t have to live the life you have been living. Let Jesus change you and your life. He knows exactly what you need and He can provide it in abundance. You don’t have to settle for a life that is not what you know it could be. I don’t make junk! You are special to Me...very special. Do something good for yourself, today! It is the most important decision that a person can ever make. It involves every day of your life from this moment forward. Become the new person that Jesus wants to help you become: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” 2 Corinthians 2:17.

Please join me in saying this prayer:

“Jesus, please come into my life. I am a sinner, but I want to change. Please make me into the person you would have me to be. I love you, Jesus; I love you. Please be my Lord and Savior and teach me how to live my life from this moment on.”

Thank you, Jesus, Amen

THE VISION:

“PURE CHRISTIANITY”

Pre-denominational biblical perspectives: An entirely new field of biblical studies. Since the Lord gave wisdom to me in reply to my religious conviction as “belonging to the same denomination that Jesus belongs to”...He has caused me to venture into great detail through my research, under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, of what may appear as a new theology, while in reality, exists as the original theology; that being, before religious men divided Christ’s church into the many, varied “denominations” we are presented with today, there was only one, true, original denomination: Christ Jesus, the Son of God and Head of the Body of Christ or His Church.

The only possible way to thoroughly study the Word of God in a non-prejudicial manner without the preconceived limitations that denominationalism requires, is to approach the Holy Word of God with the ever-trusting faith of a child, in all humility and with all reverence unto its author, God Almighty, and to do so with the mindset and pliant heart of one who only wishes to learn that which God truly desires to teach.

In addition, the research that the Spirit has led me to be involved in over the past several years has laid the foundation for the teaching of pre-denominationalism, or “Pure Christianity” as originally taught by our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. The Hidden Mysteries of God are no longer hidden. They are easily found in the Word, if one only takes the time to look for them.

Too many pastors and teachers conveniently pass over much of the Bible in lieu of those passages which are perhaps easier to teach, and therefore more profitable when asking for tithes. I pray that you, the reader and student, realize that there is nothing in the Word of God that is not intended to be there...exactly where God placed it, and written in the manner in which He intended it to be written. We may not always understand nor find the material pleasing to our current lifestyle, but that was not necessarily the intent that the Lord had in mind when He wrote it, I am sure.

My first series of research papers was compiled into a book called, “The Hidden Mysteries of God...No Longer Hidden” and I intend to make that research available in book format as time and God allow. This material came about after much prayer in asking the Holy Spirit to teach me about the Old Testament and everywhere else He would have me learn. The Spirit was extremely faithful then, and continues to lead now. I pray that you enjoy all of the material that I have available along with my associates and I invite you to visit our ministry website at: www.fulllifeministries.org for other publications and activities.

God Bless,

Rev. Dr. Steven Brown

DENOMINATIONAL PRETENSE AND FAILURE

As an infant, my parents took me into the church and had me water baptized. As I grew, I attended the children's Sunday school classes, and when given the opportunity, I took the Lord, Jesus Christ, into my life as my Lord and Savior. I also participated in the children's choir until such a time as I started attending another church with my neighbors' children.

The church I grew up in is a massive structure made of stone and resembles the great cathedrals of England and Scotland. Inside the church are many rooms and a huge sanctuary with stained glass windows everywhere. The old church organ has golden pipes of ascending and descending height, and they fill the entire width of the sanctuary.

This building was always cold and seemed appropriate for the fire and brimstone that the pastor preached every Sunday morning. This is what I imagined church to be as a child until I took a closer look at the other churches in town. There were churches of different sizes and shapes but they each had the same types of people walking to and from the parking lots, yet somehow, there was something that I was missing.

I also noticed that these other churches were not named the same name that my church was. My church was named the First United Methodist Church. I asked my father about this name, and his answer was that the difference between our church and the others was that we did not allow people of color in our church, aside from the annual Christmas performance of a black pastor from his branch of the Methodist denomination.

I did not feel good about somehow being separated from anyone, and as I grew in height and maturity, I found myself truly trying to understand the prejudice of the times. As I said earlier, I began attending another church with the neighborhood children. This was the Church of the Nazarene, and it was nice and not quite so cold all of the time. Sunday school was fun with my friends and they had a weird water tank in the sanctuary where people would be baptized by submerging their entire body rather than just sprinkling water drops onto a baby's head.

I thought this baptism was pretty cool and became personally involved myself when the children were invited to be immersed once they had reached a certain age. After this, I remember my mother taking me back and forth to the Methodist church once in awhile for Sunday services, but certainly not as often as I had been attending. As a family, we began camping on the weekends and attended Church less and less. When I reached young adulthood, I decided to check out a

few of these new, “non-denominational” churches to see what they were all about.

These new churches were interesting and kept my attention long enough to interest me in returning to Sunday services a little more regularly. But after a while, it seemed like these churches also became a part of a larger movement of non-denominational churches, so much so that it was quickly becoming a denomination of its own.

A little later on, I heard of the “Spirit-Filled” churches which were exciting and totally different from what I had become accustomed to in the churches that I had previously attended. Still, something seemed to be missing from all of these churches. I realized that the missing ingredient, for the most part, was our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit.

It has taken years of searching to try to find a church where Jesus lives and where the Word of God can honestly be taught without being guided in a direction that would best serve the interests of the denomination that was providing the teaching. Jesus’ teachings were truly unique and no wonder that He was most often referred to in the Bible as Teacher, or Rabbi. Jesus never quoted chapter and verse, quite simply because the Bible was not yet in that format, nor had it even been written. Jesus spoke and taught from the heart, and did not need to reconfirm his accuracy or authority.

So, in as far as I am concerned, I choose to follow Jesus and His teachings directly from the Word of God without having it sifted and sorted or somehow guided by a man-made denominational view. God’s Word is perfect as it was written. It is the infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God, and that, is sufficient for me.

God Bless,

Rev. Dr. Steven C. Brown

ON DIVISIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

By Rev. Dr. Steven C. Brown, Bondservant of Jesus Christ
Vice-President, Full Life Ministries, International, Inc.
Chaplain, Christian Motorcyclists Assn., Albuquerque, NM., USA.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, and had a great deal to tell them. So much that he needed to write two books. His attitude in writing to this church is described in 1 Cor.2:2. And it is with this attitude and insight that I write to the churches of our day, for the very same message applies to the most damaging problems that the body of Christ can face: divisions and dissention within His body of believers. If the body of Christ is divided, how can we make a unified attack against him who seeks only to destroy? We can't...it's as simple as that.

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

1 Corinthians 2:2 NIV

We need to maintain this constant focus on Christ alone and His atoning sacrifice rather than all of the regulations and doctrines that men have added to the Bible's original doctrine...that being the commands of God. God gave men the Law and they modified and customized it to the point of dilution and nearly to the point of making it unrecognizable. It was necessary for our Lord and Savior to make this known during His Sermon on the Mount. He repeatedly said: "You have heard that it was said...but I tell you..." And He would go about correcting the current thinking that everyone seemed to have on what the Law meant, and what sort of deviations people could make to the Law so that it would be more convenient for them in their daily lives.

He forgave them, of course, but they were heavily in the flesh and not in the Spirit, nor in the spirit of what God had intended His word to mean. God was and is very specific in His Word, and if He wanted it to say something other than what it says, He would have written something else!

We are guilty of being in the flesh from time to time, myself included of course, but we cannot put limitations on our God. He is God and we are not! We cannot say God would do this, but not that, nor can we say God really means this and not that. God knows what He said! He wrote it down in a book so WE wouldn't forget!

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm, He said: “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?”

Job 38:1-5 NIV

Paul explains in detail what was going on during his ministry and his message is timeless, for we, as the body of Christ, are confronted with the very same attack today. We can only begin to remedy the situation once the problem is brought out of the darkness and into the light.

We have certain denominations within the body, however well-intended, that are busy at tearing down and tearing apart the body of Christ by their vicious attacks on other members of the body. All the while, each of the opposing members is busy trying to lead the lost to the Lord. But this constant bickering and competition amongst Christ's own, only adds fodder to the fire that Satan has lit in an effort to destroy the body of Christ. Satan's workload is greatly decreased when believers themselves are busy erecting walls to divide the body of Christ. The body cannot function as a healthy, productive organ if there are barriers which prevent the individual parts of the body to perform what they were purposed to do.

This is precisely the condition of the body of Christ that Satan would have us dwell in: a state of confusion and ill health. I come against Satan with all of the power of Jesus’ holy name, and pray to Christ to bind Satan and loose His heavenly angels to assist the body in restoring the complete health of Christ's church.

If we could only look at the advice that the Apostle Paul gave to the church at Corinth with clear eyes and an open heart, perhaps we could truly begin the healing that the body of Christ so desperately needs at this time. Paul's timeless advice is as follows:

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

My brothers, some of Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another "I follow Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized

the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel-not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

1 Corinthians 1:4-31, 2:1-2 NIV

You see, there were no denominations when Christ ministered on earth, other than the distinctions between Jews and Greeks and those known as Gentiles. When it came to the Apostles' teachings, Paul said that people might follow one teacher's leading or another, but each of them taught Christ Jesus and Him crucified.

There obviously was enough dissention between followers even at this level for Paul to feel compelled to ask for everyone to come into agreement on the main focus....that of course, being our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, in modern times, man has felt it necessary to further divide the body of Christ into separate, smaller bodies of belief. This is not what Paul spoke of, this is even worse. As we humans have continued to further subdivide our faith, we are in fact diluting our faith. How can we remain strong as we grow further and

further from the firm foundations that are laid in the Holy Word? How can we become united?!

Take it back to Jesus, I say! God's Word is beautiful and perfect. It is the infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God. Let's quit adding to it, or taking away from it. The Lord warned us about that very thing in Revelation:

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people, Amen."

Revelation 22:18-21 NIV

I have been concerned for years about these divisions in the church, but I could not seem to place my own standing among my brothers and sisters as to where I belonged. Was I a non-denominational believer or an interdenominational believer? This truly concerned me, because when people would ask me what denomination I was, I would simply tell them that I belonged to the same denomination that Jesus Christ belonged to. This would surely cause them to look strangely at me as they tried to understand just where I fit into their understanding of acceptable places that a believer should hold.

Then just the other evening, many years after I told the first person who asked me what denomination I belonged to; the Lord shared the proper wording with me...if a human category was indeed necessary: "*Pre-denominational.*" The words rang loud and clear. When I shared this revelation with my wife, she seemed a bit taken back for the moment, and repeated her question: "pre-denominational"? I responded, "Yes." She chuckled a bit while she said, "Before denominations?" And I said, "Yes."

Before men created denominations, there was only One: Jesus Christ. And I still feel to this day as strongly drawn to Him, if not more, than the first time I told someone that I belong to the same denomination that Jesus belongs. And I always will. There is no other. Jesus said if we are not with Him, we are against Him:

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Matthew 12:30 NIV

And I am certainly with Him and no other:

“Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.”

Deuteronomy 4:39 NIV

Am I suggesting that a person is somehow wrong or misguided if they are a Protestant, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian or some other denomination or movement? Not really. What I am saying, is that we need to start seriously concentrating more on the areas that we do agree on than the minor differences that we seem to make such major issues of.

If we can agree on our love for the One, True Lord and Savior of all, and what He represents in our lives, we can then work on our differences. If we truly give our differences over to the Holy Spirit, He can lead us in the way He would have us work together in the building up and edifying of His church. And if we ask God the Father for the wisdom He promises to make available to anyone who asks, He will be faithful to provide. He is God. And we are not:

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”

James 1:2-6 NIV

Draw close to God and resist the devil and he will flee:

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

James 4:7-8a NIV

The time is short and drawing nearer. Simply put, if we believe in God, we have more in common with our brothers and sisters than we have in opposition. We need to hold on to that strength that the Lord has provided to us for the benefit of all who are lost and for all who still have not realized just how powerful our God is. We can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us:

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 4:13 NIV

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”

1 John 4:1-8 NIV

Come sweet Jesus, come.
Amen

Why Was Jesus Crucified?

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they *came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" Looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

Mark 16:1-7 NASB.

Is Easter a time when we should mourn Jesus' death? No, indeed! We should celebrate His victory over death. Believers and non-believers alike have heard of the grievous torture and crucifixion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but how many actually realize why Jesus had to die?

The Jews wanted Jesus dead because He posed a serious threat to their positions of authority and they believed that He was a rebel and a blasphemer. After Jesus had taught His followers the parable of the Good Shepherd, He went to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Dedication. We can follow along in Scripture at this point in the Gospel of John:

"At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."

John 10:22-33 NASB

The Jews just couldn't seem to grasp what Jesus was trying to tell them. They were steadfast in their ways and did not want to step away from a religion of laws and regulations that they had customized to fit their personal needs. Laws that were a far cry from the Law that God had given to Moses. In other words, they had become very "comfortable" with their religion, and they really didn't want anyone interfering with it. In that regard, Jesus truly was a stumbling block for most of them. After Jesus had raised His friend, Lazarus, from the dead, we see in Scripture how the Jews were plotting to kill Him:

"Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they planned together to kill Him."

John 11:45-53 NASB

The Jews could not look beyond the lives that they were living on earth. They, like so many others, even today, can't imagine life beyond death. And those that might believe that there is something for them after death are usually somewhat confused or misled. There are only two places a person can go after death: heaven or hell. Many people might believe that since they are essentially good, and if they go about their lives doing good for others that surely they would be welcome in heaven. But unfortunately for them, this is not the case.

You can do great things in your life and be very successful financially, but that won't get you into heaven, I guarantee it. You can't get to heaven by doing good works or acquiring fame and fortune. Jesus spoke about this in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 8, verses 36 and 37: "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" If you have ever wondered what the phrase, "Selling your soul to the devil" means, you should now have a good idea. Jesus was very specific in His teaching on who will go to heaven:

"Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

John 14:6 NASB

Those that follow Jesus are guaranteed a place in heaven, and we have that assurance from Jesus' own words:

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also."

John 14:1-3 NASB

If you are beginning to think that it might be a good idea to ask Jesus into your life, and you may have actually been considering it for awhile, I want you to realize that this is not a good idea. (pause...selah) This is a GOD idea! He planted that seed of thought in you long before you realized it, and maybe it has come time that you acted upon it, today. It's really not that hard, and it is the single most important decision that you will ever make in your life. Simon Peter and Andrew made that decision in the Gospel of Matthew:

"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He *said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."

Matthew 4:17-20

Now these two men immediately left their professions and livelihoods to follow someone Who would change their lives entirely from that moment on. Something must have inspired them to make such a serious decision. This inspiration no doubt came from the Holy Spirit of God. He is the third person of the Godhead. It was not just a good idea that these men would eventually be transformed from fishermen to Apostles. This indeed was a GOD idea.

You see, we have so much more to be concerned about than just our day-to-day existence here on earth. Do you honestly know where you would go if you died today? That's a tough question, I know, but a very necessary question. Jesus provides the only guarantee that you will go to heaven, for certain. He is the only way.

There is an example in the Bible of two men given the opportunity to choose their destiny. One chose Christ the other ridiculed our Lord and Savior. One man was guaranteed a place in heaven, and the other was prevented from entering:

"When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying,

"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:33-43 NASB

Jesus shows us the way to Paradise...eternal Paradise, for He was the firstborn from the dead and He leads the way. After all, He is the Son of God. In Colossians, chapter 1, verses 15 through 20, we see that He is our Savior and He is our reconciliation to God. In other words, He provides for the forgiveness of our sins:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

Colossians 1:15-20 NASB

Why was Jesus crucified? He was crucified for me! And for you! He died so that we might be set free. I am a sinner, but I am a forgiven sinner! I have been forgiven of my sins. How do I know that? Because Jesus became sin for me and I have been cleansed by the blood He shed upon the cross. Hallelujah!

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

Romans 8:1-2 NASB

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

II Corinthians 5:17 NASB

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Romans 10:9-10 NASB

Is there anyone here who believes that they are without sin? 1 John 1:8-9 says: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Is anyone lonely?

Does anyone have an aching heart?

Is anyone sick and the doctors just can't seem to offer much hope?

Has anyone given their life to the Lord in the past, but has stepped off of the narrow path and needs to come back to a right relationship with Jesus?

Do you have an emptiness that just can't seem to get filled in your life?

You need Jesus in your life!

Come to Him now for He is waiting. All you have to do is ask. Please say this simple prayer with me:

Sweet Jesus, please come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I accept You as my personal Lord and Savior from this moment on, and forever.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen”

JESUS' LIFE LESSON 101:

HUMILITY

By Rev. Dr. Steven C. Brown, D.D.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and then take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.”

Matthew 16:24-27 NASB

Jesus' Life Lesson 101-Humility

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines humility as:

Humility: N. The quality or condition of being humble; modest sense of one's own importance, rank, etc.-Syn. Loneliness, meekness, submissiveness. -Ant. Pride.

Marilyn and I share what the Holy Spirit has laid upon our hearts almost continuously, and praise God. We seem to listen to the same Spirit. Recently I had been sharing about the Apostle Paul and his tumultuous ministry and most recently about the need for a Bible study on the subject of humility from a biblical perspective.

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Romans 12:3-5 NIV

Marilyn suggested that I write a study on Paul since he considered himself the least among the apostles:

"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was within me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed."

1 Corinthians 15:9-11 NIV

Paul's ministry ranged from being a forceful, head-strong enemy of the early Christian church to becoming the minister to the Gentiles by divine appointment. This appointment could not have been possible had Paul not completely surrendered himself to the Lord, Jesus Christ. One experience in Paul's life changed the direction of his life entirely, converting him from a devoted Pharisee to a Christian apostle. It was necessary for the Lord to personally intervene in Paul's life so that he could be used as the Lord's vessel to help change the lives of a multitude of God's children:

"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Paul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ."

Acts 9:1-22 NASB

The reason I brought up this history of Paul's ministry is to show how humility might be impressed upon us from above. Marilyn and I have often talked about the sincerity of a believer. Do they not only talk the talk, but likewise walk the walk? Are they fair weather or weekend warrior Christians? Marilyn shared a message with me that she saw displayed on a church marquee, saying: "Many Christians want to serve God...but only in an advisory capacity." True, this is a humorous punch line, but ironically it is also too true for many Christians who somehow place themselves at a religious notch slightly higher than all of the rest of us. This statement on the marquee is an excellent illustration of a spirit that is anything but a humble spirit.

It is a real joy to be full of fire and enthusiasm in serving the Lord but this enthusiasm also needs to be tempered with humility. If we find ourselves more occupied with impressing others than with teaching or in speaking rather than listening, how can we ever expect to learn?! We become a disservice to God and to those we minister to. Jesus' half-brother, James, has excellent insight into the subject of humility in his gospel:

“This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in the mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.”

James 1:19-26 NASB

God doesn't need an advisor or a counselor as we read in the book of Isaiah the prophet, chapter 40:12-14, and in Job 38:1-4:

“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has influenced Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?”

Isaiah 40:12-14 NASB

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.”

Job 38:1-4 NASB

These first few verses of this chapter of Job illustrate the unfathomable superiority of the wisdom of God compared to that of the man He was questioning. Job was a godly man and a high priest during this time of his life, but God needed to correct his thinking along with the thinking of three of his friends

as we see in the final chapters of Job. God spoke to Job in a message which followed directly on the heels of the speech of a previously unmentioned fourth friend, Elihu. This humble man had waited for the other three to finish speaking since they were his elders, before he began to speak from what was nearly bursting to come out. All the while, this special person, Elihu, could be the very intermediary that Job had been praying for in earnest:

“My face is flushed from weeping, and deep darkness is on my eyelids, although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure. O earth, do not cover my blood, and let there be no resting place for my cry. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high. My friends are scoffers; my eye weeps to God. O that a man might plead with God as a man with his neighbor.”

Job 16:16-21 NASB

Job knew in his heart that God would hear his prayers if he only had an intercessor; someone to speak on his behalf to God. Of course we have an intercessor in our marvelous Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; but before Christ died on the cross at Calvary there was no one to act in that capacity. This incident in Job is extremely special and foreshadows the work of Christ. Job chapters 32 through 42 share the messages of wisdom that were imparted upon Job. One should realize also that once Job had humbled himself entirely before God, that God restored all that Job had lost, and then some. In other words, they were restored in abundance.

A point to note is that humility is not necessarily an inherent trait in a person. Sometimes, as with Paul and Job, humility seems to be forced upon us. We are presented with opportunities in life where we can take the money and run...or, we can contribute. We can accept all the praise and thanks for a job well done, or we can give the praise to where it really belongs. We can always have a glass that is half-empty or be grateful that we have a glass and something to put in it. This reminds me of the accounts in a book I read as a young man entitled, “Rare Earth.” If you haven’t read it yet, you should. It details the accounts of Hiroshima and the aftermath.

As a young man, I was always a little shy, but shyness doesn’t always translate to humility. I was brought to a state of humility largely by God when He struck me to my knees on a couple of separate occasions. And when I hadn’t yet been humbled quite enough, He laid me flat out on my back in front of the whole church! I didn’t quite know what to think of all of this. It was a little scary, a little exciting, and a bit embarrassing; but all of those minor human emotions were greatly overshadowed by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the blessings I received while in His presence. You see, my Father was disciplining me at these times just as it explains in the book of Hebrews. And through discipline, or the

potential threat of discipline, one might realize as I did, that discipline may be necessary for one to even understand or to see what humility before God is:

“You have not resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

Hebrews 12:4-6 NASB

Throughout my life I have been struck with several severe and chronic illnesses that could only truly be overcome by God, and as was the case with the apostle Paul, I still have at least one major thorn to keep me humble before almighty God. Paul had great knowledge and wisdom and had been exposed to things of a divine nature, so rather than allowing him to puff up with boasting and pride, the Lord God placed a reminder in his thorn to keep the apostle humble and focused in his ministry:

“Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-whether in the body or apart from the body- I do not know, God knows-was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

II Corinthians 12:1-10 NASB

Humility, quite frankly, is the opposite of stardom and recognition. One who seeks to be recognized or to draw personal attention might find recognition difficult to obtain when the better goal of humility before God and your peers becomes a way of life. Jesus was and is the epitome of humility in everything about Himself and His ministry. He always gave all the praise and glory and honor to God the Father. Jesus illustrated true humility in His teaching in the Gospel of Matthew:

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, He is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Mt. 18:1-6 NASB

For those of us who are not naturally blessed with humility, it becomes necessary to learn and to experience humility from the biblical perspective where we might find this blessing, and likewise become a blessing to others. Being humbled in our lives doesn't usually come through fortunate or prosperous events, although it certainly can. Life-changing humility is a very prosperous transformation but most often comes as a result of an extreme reality-check brought about by unfortunate or tragic events we encounter in our daily existences. After I was revived three times, lifted three times from a wheelchair, having everything that ever mattered to me stripped away and suffering multiple chronic illnesses, I began to understand the true meaning of humility. I was a hard nut to crack apparently and it took years for me to appreciate what Job meant as he reprimanded his wife:

“Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

Job 2:7-10 NASB

In other words, are we to only love God during the good times? Perhaps we should also love God during the not-so-good times, possibly even more. God loves us...always. His love is never-ending, and is for all people; even those who do you wrong. He teaches us to pray, even for those who persecute us:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 5:43-48 NASB

Humility can be expressed and illustrated in many ways. A friend of mine recently shared a dream he had that was puzzling him. He didn't know quite what to think of it, so he shared it with Marilyn and I. He dreamed that he found himself in an unfamiliar place, somewhere unknown to him. He was in an old tavern or saloon. After looking around, he left the area and walked toward the back of the building and into a hallway where he saw several people dressed in gowns or robes milling about. He saw a man in the doorway that they were all walking through and my friend was told that these people were in the choir. This man told my friend that he couldn't wear one of the robes, and this didn't make any sense to him. Then in the next moment he found himself someplace entirely different, as he was now standing before God, but to his surprise, he was standing there naked! His old clothes were suddenly gone, and he was now standing stark-naked before God Almighty. This would truly have been a powerfully humbling experience!

My friend's dream ended abruptly at this point, but when he awoke, he could remember the dream which usually wasn't the case with most of his dreams. When he told Marilyn and I about this dream, I told him that it reminded me of a similar situation in the Bible where a man had been standing before God in tattered, old clothing and suddenly God commanded that the old clothing be removed and replaced with clean, new clothing. My friend was a bit surprised with my interpretation of his dream, even though I had no intention of attempting an interpretation, and he went so far as to say that he had never heard of such an incident, and he was quite sure that it wasn't in the Bible.

I couldn't remember from where I had read it, other than in the Old Testament, but I did remember the word "rainment" in regard to the new clothing that God placed upon this biblical character. This word was all of a clue that my friend's wife needed to start searching in their miniature electronic Bible that they carry with them on our motorcycle ministry events and everywhere they go. After a couple of attempts, she was successful in locating an incident about Joshua standing before God, and she exclaimed, "That sounds just like your dream!" The passage she found is in Zechariah:

"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the Angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before Him, saying "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again He said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the Angel of the Lord was standing by.

And the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, if you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among those who are standing here. Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring My servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it," declares the Lord of Hosts, "and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."

Zechariah 3:1-9 NASB

After thinking and praying on this incident, I spoke to my friend again and told him that I believe his dream was a vision of himself standing before God and his old clothing had been removed in anticipation of receiving his new, clean clothes. The man who had been in the doorway with the choir earlier was Satan, who had been attempting to prevent my friend from standing before God the way he was dressed, so God simply removed that barrier of clothing. After all, God didn't create us to be born with clothes on.

This gave my friend much to ponder, especially in letting go of the "old clothes" from his past, so that he can receive the new clothing that the Lord has prepared for him. This is an excellent example of humbling, or allowing oneself to be humbled, so that they might receive whatever the Lord has provided for us:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

II Corinthians 5:17 NASB

It is a wonderful blessing to minister the Word of God, and we are especially blessed to be selected by God as His messengers in the times and places of His choosing. Each of us has the potential to be a mighty man or woman of God as long as we keep our fleshly, human desires and motivations out of the work that we do for the Lord. Sometimes the most difficult thing for someone to do is to trust in God completely and lean not on our own understanding:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make your paths straight.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and turn away from evil.
It will be a healing to your body
and refreshment to your bones."

Proverbs 3:5-8 NASB

There are crucial moments in our ministry to others and to ourselves, individually, when it becomes imperative that we simply sit down and shut up and listen to what God has to say to us. He has probably heard more than enough from us. Job and his friends learned this lesson. Joshua and Zechariah learned this lesson. Can we learn this lesson as well?

When do we talk and when do we listen? When do we give and when do we receive? As we begin closing this lesson, we will review two more passages for guidance. One from the Old Covenant and one from the new:

“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven-

A time to give birth and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.
A time to kill and a time to heal;
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.
A time to search and a time to give up as lost;
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;
A time to be silent and a time to speak.
A time to love and a time to hate;
A time for war and a time for peace.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NASB

It truly is a blessing to be full of fire and enthusiasm as we travel about ministering the Word of God, but there is also a time to sit at the Teacher’s feet...and listen:

“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.”

But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:38-42 NASB

Thank you, Jesus, for the lessons You teach us. It is in Your most holy name that we praise You.

Amen and amen.

Additional Study Scriptures:

Proverbs 15:33; 18:12; 22:4

Acts 20:19

Colossians 2:18, 23

I Peter 5:5

Psalms 51:15-17

Isaiah 57:15; 64:6

Hebrews 5:12-14; 13:20, 21

2 Timothy 3:10-17

II Chronicles 7:14

Luke 14:11; 18:14.

“AT THE MASTER’S FEET”

One Weekend With The Holy Spirit

By Steve Brown, Chaplain for the Soncrest Riders, Albuquerque, N.M.

Oh, what a blessing was had by all at the 2003 Christian Motorcyclist’s Association New Mexico State Rally! Chama, New Mexico was hot during the day and cool at night, which is typical for our high desert environment. The campgrounds were clean and well-maintained and Marilyn and I even got to wet our fishing lines in the trout stream that runs alongside the campgrounds and worship center.

We always enjoy gathering with our Christian brothers and sisters to share in our love for the Lord, but this particular rally proved to be a turning point in this old jail chaplain’s life. Our new State Coordinator, Roy Morrow, from Farmington was present along with his lovely wife, Vikki, and if you have never met Roy you have missed out on the powerful presence he has not only from his heartwarming smile, but add that to his 6 foot 4 inch, 269 pound frame and you might begin to understand why heads turn when he walks up to the podium. The Lord definitely has a plan for Roy and I will enjoy watching how his service to the Lord matures as his tenure with CMA also lengthens.

The new Southwest Regional Evangelist team of Hiram and Sharon Villasenor have always blessed everyone with their music ministry as our former New Mexico State Coordinators, but now there is no doubt that they have been lifted up to encourage God’s children in a much larger Evangelistic outreach throughout all of the southwestern United States. I personally received an advance preview of Sharon’s powerful Saturday morning message on God’s mercy the evening before she gave it when we attended the opening praise and worship meeting on Friday evening.

Many lives were touched at this outwardly quiet and comfortable gathering of believers, and I would like to share some of the incredible personal testimony surrounding this blessed event. This would prove to be an event where I, myself, would become the student rather than the teacher, and I would undergo some tremendous discipline along with some likewise tremendous blessings in just a few short days. All of this was under the direction of the God who loves us, each and every one.

To really share the brevity of this testimony, allow me to provide a little of the history that led up to our most recent CMA rally. The week just prior to the

Chama rally you would find me hospitalized from an exacerbation (flare-up) of a very serious condition I suffer from called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, or COPD. This disease is further complicated with acute asthma and I find myself very susceptible to all kinds of things. My lungs had become infected after I was cleaning out our swamp cooler to make it ready for the season, and a pile of lime dust that I had swept up was suddenly kicked-up by a wind gust, which unfortunately I inhaled into my lungs. Lime dust is caustic and turns into a paste when it gets wet, so you can imagine how hard it might be to get it flushed out of your lungs. You can't just connect a nozzle to your lungs and hose them down.

Marilyn had to take me to the Emergency Room early Saturday morning the week just before the Chama rally. The ER staff worked on me for several hours before they had me stabilized enough to release me to return home. The following Monday morning I had a scheduled appointment with my Pulmonary Specialist and it didn't take him long to admit me directly into the main hospital. I told my doctor that I really needed to be back out of the hospital by the coming weekend because of the rally and also because Marilyn and I would be celebrating our seventh wedding anniversary on Sunday. (Marilyn and I first met in choir in the new Church that I just started attending a little over seven years ago.) My doctor told me that my discharge request "was a lofty goal" and he didn't really sound very optimistic about my odds.

Well, after staying in bed for twenty four hours straight, I spoke again with my doctor as he was making his rounds the next morning and he said that I should probably work on getting out of bed and moving around, and I agreed with him. My best friend, Patrick, stopped by on his Goldwing and after a short visit he anointed my head with oil and laid hands on my forehead and chest. He began praying for healing and never spoke a word of English and under the hand that he placed on my chest it felt as though there were a burning coal as God was performing as the Great Physician.

That day I finished my third lap around the hospital and rested in the recliner in between, to watch T.V. and eat my meals during this, the second day of my stay in the hospital. When my doctor returned to visit the next morning and asked how I was feeling, I simply said, "I want to go home." He smiled and responded by saying He couldn't really find a good reason to keep me there any longer. My doctor knows that I am a Christian and a bike rider, and he is Jewish, I believe, so when I read his doctor's notes a few days later I had to smile when I saw that he fell just short of calling my recovery miraculous. He wrote that I had made a "fairly dramatic recovery after only a few days in the hospital."

Marilyn and I were very glad to be able now to attend the rally in Chama, even though we would be driving rather than riding our bikes. Nevertheless we were still going, praise the Lord! Marilyn had called my oxygen supplier and after they had made all of their calculations, they figured that I would need to take four

bottles of oxygen for our trip. I left one bottle at home for emergencies since my deliveries had been so goofed up lately. Marilyn wasn't happy with my decision to leave one of the bottles behind, and she didn't hesitate to voice her opinion as we unloaded our SUV to take our stuff into the motel room when we arrived in Chama on Friday afternoon.

Once we were unloaded, we drove the short distance over to the worship center next to the campground and signed in for the rally and picked up our prepared materials. Once that was all finished, we drove down to the campgrounds to find our friends who had arrived the previous day. We just followed our noses until we came upon Dick and Debby at their campsite. Dick is another "lunger" as we pulmonary patients are so lovingly referred as, but he apparently didn't believe he had enough room to load any oxygen for himself along with all of their other camping supplies. Dick doesn't need oxygen 24 hours a day, but there certainly are times when he does definitely need it, so my heart immediately went out to our latest "Evangelist in training."

Even though I was supposedly one tank short for my own oxygen needs, my friend Dick had none. I quickly and prayerfully asked God if it would be all right to share my oxygen with Dick, and the quick response I received was, "Of course, why did you need to ask?" As I convinced my equally stubborn friend to sit down and use the oxygen, I felt confident that God would make sure that whatever oxygen we had available would be in abundance for both our needs. When Dick had raised his oxygen-saturation level for this higher elevation, Marilyn and I returned to our room to get ready for the first service of the rally. The first service is always one of our favorites since it is mostly praise and worship, and also since Marilyn and I first met in choir and love to sing praises to the Lord together. The last day of this rally would also be our seventh wedding anniversary, and celebrating the seven best years of my life in the presence of God along with my friends couldn't have been planned by anyone but God, Himself.

When we arrived at the worship center that evening I wished we could have rode our bikes in like everyone else for several reasons, but most of all because I am so proud of how well Marilyn rides now. She has become such a good rider, and that is really saying something for someone who wouldn't even be caught as a passenger on anyone's bike just three, short years ago. Now I am proud to ride with her anywhere and any time. But having the opportunity to just be at this rally was a special blessing in itself, now matter how we arrived.

Hiram and Sharon had enlisted the help of their very talented Daughter and Son-in-law to help with the praise and worship that evening, and if you didn't feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, you just weren't feeling at all! When one of my favorite songs came up, "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord" I found myself broken-hearted because I was struggling so hard with a song that I just loved to sing. God must have known how difficult this was for me and when He chose to speak to my heart in that very personal, very specific way He has in

communicating directly to me alone, He said, “Just turn off the damn oxygen, and sing!” And I immediately bent over, turned the tank off, took the nasal canula out of my nose, cleared my throat, and began singing beautifully in the Spirit at the top of my lungs! What a blessing, indeed!

I know that the man standing directly in front of me was touched, because I heard him begin to praise God out loud, but I didn’t know if anyone else noticed the change in my voice. But then I also realized, that it didn’t really matter about me, because it is all about Jesus, as our new State Coordinator would later emphasize. And I continued to sing boldly for the remaining 2 or 3 songs before we returned to our room for the night.

The Spirit of God was all over me, praise the Lord and I wouldn’t need to turn my mandatory oxygen back on again until the morning we were leaving from the rally, two days later. The Lord was giving me a reprieve so I could more fully enjoy the blessings of this rally and He was guaranteeing that both Dick and I would have more oxygen than we would need. He was meeting our needs in abundance. (Dick was also blessed several ways that weekend, but that will be his testimony to share as the Lord directs.)

As we were settling back in our room, Marilyn told me, “You should have heard what Debby had to say about your singing.” “Oh really” I replied, then said, “They were so far away, I didn’t think that they could hear.” Marilyn responded, “She told me after the services that, “Steve sings pretty good for someone who can hardly breathe!” And you know, every time I have shared this story with someone since then, the tears would just start flowing. And they still do, even as I write about it now.

You see, when the truth be known, I had my own secret agenda that I carried along with me to the rally that weekend. I had just completed writing a lengthy Bible study entitled, “Jesus’ Life Lesson-101-Humility” which I thoroughly intended to be primarily directed toward one of our newest members who had become a real thorn in my side. As it were, the Holy Spirit spent so much time with me in authoring that study until I finally realized who the real student in this lesson on humility was to be. And that of course, would be the Bible study teacher, himself. Me.

This brother who was previously such a thorn is now my friend, I pray, and also someone that I can hopefully and personally help raise up in service to the Lord, if he would allow it. Marilyn told me as we were leaving Chama to head back home that she felt as though God had given me a second lease on life. I agreed, and added that maybe this was my fifth or sixth lease on life. You see, I have already been revived at least three times in my life up to this point. When we returned home to Albuquerque I began sharing with everyone about what went on at the rally and how I felt as though I were still walking two feet off of the ground, and Satan tried earnestly to kill me three more times in the following

three weeks. I write this testimony to you now to prove Jesus' victory over those attempts. And even though my doctors have now forced me into early retirement, I told my friends that I have considered it a promotion so that now I can work for my Lord, full-time!

The day after I was interviewed by the Social Security folks and officially submitted my disability application, I was offered and without hesitation, accepted the position of Dean of a new Christian School of Ministry. As one door is closed, another is opened. And I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Thank-you, Jesus, for the honor and the privilege to serve You.
Amen

Rev. Dr. S. C. Brown, D.D.