

# “Brace Yourself for Impact” – preparing your soul

## 01 – It is Time to Prepare

There are times in life we are overwhelmed with problems, challenges, confusion and hardships. During these times we find it hard to understand why life is so painful. It is difficult to trust God and impossible to pray with any hope or confidence while we are being defeated in the battle of life. During these battles it is not a time to prepare your soul for war. Preparation for war is done in times of peace just like planting seeds for the fall harvest is done in the spring.

Today, if we prepare our souls with an understanding of God’s promises and take time to study God’s ways, we can brace ourselves for impact when the negative situations of this fallen world arise in our personal life, at work, in relationships, in finances or in our health. With our souls sown with the seed of God’s word we will be able to open a harvest of peace and rest when it is needed. If we have fortified ourselves with understanding, when an invasion from world overwhelms us we will be able to maintain confidence and trust in God.

The necessity of battle preparation is not only true concerning our personal problems, but is particularly true as our culture, our nation and our world move further away from the Truth of God’s Word and enthusiastically celebrate choices that rebel against God’s created Reality. As this decline continues life will become more difficult for many people, because our culture is becoming more antagonistic toward the ways of God.

In the post-Christian Western world we may see professing Christians in situations that parallel David pursued by Saul, Shadrach in Nebuchadnezzar’s fire, Daniel facing the lions of Darius, Jesus before Pilate, Paul testifying in the imperial court of Nero and John exiled to Patmos by Domitian. When this happens we will need our souls prepared with an understanding of God’s promises and God’s ways.

Daily we need to be able to enter into the place God has prepared for our souls to rest. Our souls can remain at rest in God’s promises if we can maintain concentration on those promises. As we remember in our minds the promises God has spoken to us and keep our thoughts on God’s ways our souls will be able to maintain the rest of God while chaos and trouble swirl around us.

Entering this place of rest will only be possible if the believer has been taught and encouraged with the Word of God. Then, the believer himself must intentionally enter that rest and stubbornly refuse to give up the hope they have from knowing the ways of the Lord and the confidence they have from understanding the promises he has made. No matter what storm or disaster is swirling around the believer their soul can remain anchored in God’s rest protected by a fortress of God and his Word.

This is the confidence David, Shadrach, Daniel, Paul and John had as they stared down the fire, the lions and the emperors while testifying to the glory, the ways and the faithfulness of their God. The Word that they had is the same as the Word available to us today. Just as their Lord and God was faithful and true, so will yours be.

It is time to prepare your soul and brace for impact!

## 02 – Theology of the Shattered Windshield

Paul writes to the Ephesians:

*“I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

*They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.”*

- Ephesians 4:17

The life of a believer is to be lived focusing on the Truth and the Reality of God. A believer needs to hold to the knowledge that God is the creator and sustainer of our lives. God is supreme and his wisdom surpasses our understanding. His standard of righteousness is absolute and unchanging through all generations.

A believer must live in this world but not allow the things or the ways of the world to distract them from the big picture. When a person drives a car they are focused on the road and the activity outside the car. The driver looks through the windshield, not at the windshield. The safe driver cannot look inside the car for very long without having some major problems outside the car. So it is in comparison with the life of the believer. A believer is inside the world but must be viewing life through the windshield of God’s revelation that has been given to man as found in the scriptures.

Paul says we must “no longer live as the Gentiles do” who have no view outside the windshield. They spend their entire lives trying to find direction and avoid accidents but they never look outside the car. Their whole focus is on the interior of the car as they speed through life. They have no perspective of God, eternity, Truth, or Reality. They are living in “the futility of their thinking.” It is easy to understand why, though. They have never seen or believed anything else. It is as if they are driving at night with the dome light on and the headlights off.

This is important to the believer for two reasons. Although we have accepted the reality of God and have, at least for a moment, looked up through the windshield long enough to realize we are speeding through life on very busy spiritual highway, we often continue to “live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.” We, too, spend the majority of our lives focused on the inside of the car and not on the highway. We are not looking through the windshield at the more serious issues.

Paul says, that he “insist on it in the Lord” that we live by looking through the windshield as we make decisions and evaluations.

One of the biggest challenges for the sincere believer who has lived their life looking at God through their windshield is when something strikes our windshield causing it to shatter. A disaster, a situation, something unexpected and undeserved comes from outside the car. It hits our windshield, disappears and leaves a fragmented, shattered windshield filled with distracting lines and breaks. This presents a new challenge for the believer who has been looking through this clear windshield at God.

Up until now the challenge was to either look through the windshield or look inside the car. This new challenge forces the believer to either focus on the shattered windshield or to continue to look through the fragmented pieces of the windshield at God.

We must realize, and know by faith, that your shattered windshield has not changed anything outside the car. The only thing that has changed is your ability to see it clearly and focus on it through the advantage of a crystal clear windshield. A crack in your windshield does not represent a crack in the kingdom of God. A shattered windshield is not a true representation of everything outside the car. A broken windshield is simply a distraction from the reality that is still outside your car and bigger than your life. Do not allow a shattered windshield to pull your attention back inside the car where you are forced once again to live in the futility of your thinking.

### **03 - Faith**

To have faith in something you will first need to have some information or knowledge about the thing in which you want to have faith. To believe a medication can help, you will first need to know a few things. One, you need to know this particular medication exists. Two, you will need to know generally what it has done in the past. Three, you may need to trust the doctor prescribing the medication. The same is true concerning God and what the Almighty is doing in history and in your life. This information is available in the Bible.

The first issue concerning the Bible is to identify or establish what you think of the Bible. Do you know if it is the actual revealed Word of God? Or, do you think and believe it is fiction, or a mere legend written down to manipulate masses of people by the elite priests and royalty? If you do not believe the Bible you will not be able to believe the God of the Bible.

If you do not trust the Bible you will need to get information about God from some other source. Where would you go? Another religion? But, what is the source of authority in that religion? Is it trustworthy?

Instead of going to the Bible for information about God you could use your own judgment and come up with your own opinion about God based on your own thoughts and experience. But, before you go too far down this road of deciding what is eternally true in realms you have never ventured, you should first admit how limited your own knowledge is on simple things you use every day such as automobiles, electronic devices, plumbing systems or air conditioning. If any of these broke down would you simply fix it because you know how, or would you call someone for help? Or, what about political situations in your city, your nation and countries around the world? Do you know when they were established, who is pulling their strings, what are the nations' treaties and where are their boundaries? Or, can you diagnose your own blood condition, translate any foreign brochure into your own language, plant the crops you will harvest for your own food supply next year and read all the books written by mankind just in the last 12 months? (Realize humanity has been writing "books" for 6,000 years.) We would each live miserable lives and perish quickly if today each of us as individuals had to understand all these systems and apply all this information.

If we are that limited in natural knowledge concerning things we have available to us in our daily lives, imagine how hopelessly dark it would be to describe with any accuracy actual spiritual reality using only our imagination and our own unauthenticated knowledge. We cannot create our own medical reality, food system, government, language or history. Neither can we create the Truth about God. This Truth must be revealed to us.

If I created my own reality that did not match true science, nutrition, language or history I would perish miserably and quickly. If I created my own personal “truth” about “god” I would likewise perish.

God reveals himself in order for us to trust him and have confidence in him, his ways and his purpose. God does not come to us to be manipulated by us, but to guide, encourage and empower us. The Creator comes to assist his creation in fulfilling its created purpose, but never to be manipulated or ruled by his creation.

There are several concepts that God has revealed to mankind that will provide a fortification for the soul. These come as revelations of God’s character, ways, purposes and promises. Knowledge of these truths will be the sure foundation for a faith that will stabilize your soul.

## 04- The Meribah Experience

In Exodus 7-13 Moses appears before Pharaoh, performs signs and ten plagues to motivate Pharaoh to release the Hebrews. The full sequence of Moses returning from Midian to appear before Pharaoh, perform the ten plagues and lead the Hebrews to the Red Sea takes a year or less.

The Hebrews had a promise found in Genesis 15:1-16 given by the Lord to their forefather Abraham around 2000 BC that they would be given the land of Canaan in the future:

“Then the Lord said to Abram,

“Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

- Genesis 15:13-16

When the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush in Midian around 1446 BC the Lord restated this promise and told Moses it was time to bring this promise to pass:

“Then the Lord said,

“I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of

the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites."

- Exodus 3:7-8

When Moses arrived in Egypt a couple of weeks later he spoke to the Hebrews and their elders telling them the Lord himself had said it was time for the Lord to fulfill this promise:

"Say therefore to the people of Israel,  
'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,  
and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm  
and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God,  
and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of  
the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord."

- Exodus 6:6-8

Moses shared these promises with the Hebrew people before he had spoken to Pharaoh and before the plagues had begun. But, because of years of oppression and the constant bombardment the cultural influence of Egypt the Hebrew people could not understand or trust the Word of God. The very next verse says that when Moses spoke these promises to the Hebrew people they would not listen because of "their broken spirit and harsh slavery."

"Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses,  
because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery."

- Exodus 6:9

These people's souls had been overrun and taken captive by Egyptian thought. The fortress of their soul had become a stronghold of the world and was void of the knowledge of God.

The next seven chapters (Exodus 7-13) cover about 5-12 months and describe the Lord's mighty works for his broken, faithless people in Egypt. Moses speaks to Pharaoh, performs signs and calls down ten plagues that paralyze the power Pharaoh, shut down Egyptian culture and prepare his people for deliverance.

The night of the final plague before Pharaoh released the Hebrews Moses instituted the Passover meal and reiterated the ancient promises again to the Hebrew people who now had seen firsthand the works of the Lord on their behalf:

"Then Moses said to the people,  
"Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery,  
for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.  
Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. And when the Lord brings you into the land of the  
Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers  
to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month."

- Exodus 13:3-5

The next day the Exodus occurs and the Lord begins to lead the Hebrews through the wilderness to the Promised Land with his presence in a visible pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire at night. The Hebrews had seen the works of God and his faithfulness to his Word.

Immediately in the next chapter (Exodus 14) the Hebrews are trapped at the Red Sea and Pharaoh has organized his military forces to pursue them, but the Lord parts the waters of the Red Sea so his people can escape before the waters return to drown the Egyptian forces. Another mighty work had been seen and experienced by the Hebrew congregation. The community celebrates with a time of fellowship and a song service which is recorded in the next chapter. Following this praise and worship service is the account in chapter 16 of the Lord providing supernatural food (manna) for the Hebrew community in what otherwise would be a barren wilderness without food. With this community fellowship meal, all is good with the people of the Lord.

All is good, that is, until chapter 17 where it becomes apparent that even though the Israelites have seen God's faithful works as he leads them to the fulfillment of the promises in his Word, they do not know his ways or have faith in him. Though they see God's works, they do not know, understand or trust the Lord's ways. Thus proving the point that besides the fact that supernatural signs and miracles do not build faith in people, neither do community gatherings, song services or potluck meals communicate the knowledge of God to build faith in the believer.

In 1445, in Exodus 17:1-7 Israel camps at Rephidim, but there is no water to drink. The biblical text says, "the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' "

"Therefore the people quarreled (*rib* = "strive", "contend") with Moses and said,  
'Give us water to drink.'

And Moses said to them,

'Why do you quarrel (*rib* = "strive", "contend") with me?

Why do you test (*nasah* = "to test", "to try") the Lord?

But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said,  
'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?' "

- Exodus 17:2-3

The word "quarrel" is the word *rib* in the Hebrew. This word is used to refer to an ordinary argument, but it also is used to refer to a legal lawsuit being filed. (Dt. 25:1) This "quarreling" with Moses may well have been the forming of a pretrial which was a practice well documented in the Ancient Near East during this time period. If Moses, the accused in this developing courtroom battle, does not meet the legal demand, such as is made here – "Give us water to drink," – the accused is taken to trial before the judicial elders of the people. Moses is being legally accused of breaching his agreement with the people that he promised to lead through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The charges brought before the Hebrew elders might even involve attempted murder – "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us?"

Moses counters this legal threat by asking them, "Why do you test the Lord?" It was not Moses who made the promise to Abraham in 2000 BC and it was not Moses who came to Egypt with ten plagues promising to fulfill his promises. The originator and fulfiller of the promises was the Lord. So, the

people were putting the Lord on trial. The Hebrews were “testing” or “trying” the Lord in their own legal case.

Then, the Lord dismisses the entire legal case by having Moses provide water while the potential jury, the judicial elders, stand right up front to witness the evidence of the Lord’s faithfulness to his promises.

“So Moses cried to the Lord,  
‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.’  
And the Lord said to Moses,  
‘Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel,  
and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.  
Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb,  
and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.’  
And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Moses called the place “Massah” and “Meribah” because of the quarreling of the people and their testing of the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

“(Moses) called the name of the place Massah and Meribah,  
because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying,  
“Is the LORD among us or not?”  
- Exodus 17:7

The two Hebrew words that Moses used to name this physical location where the Israelites rebelled against the Lord were:

One, *Massah* which comes from the Hebrew word *nash* which means “to test” or “to try”. At Massah during their first year in the wilderness the Israelites “tested” the Lord’s faithfulness and put God on “trial” for breaking his covenant with them.

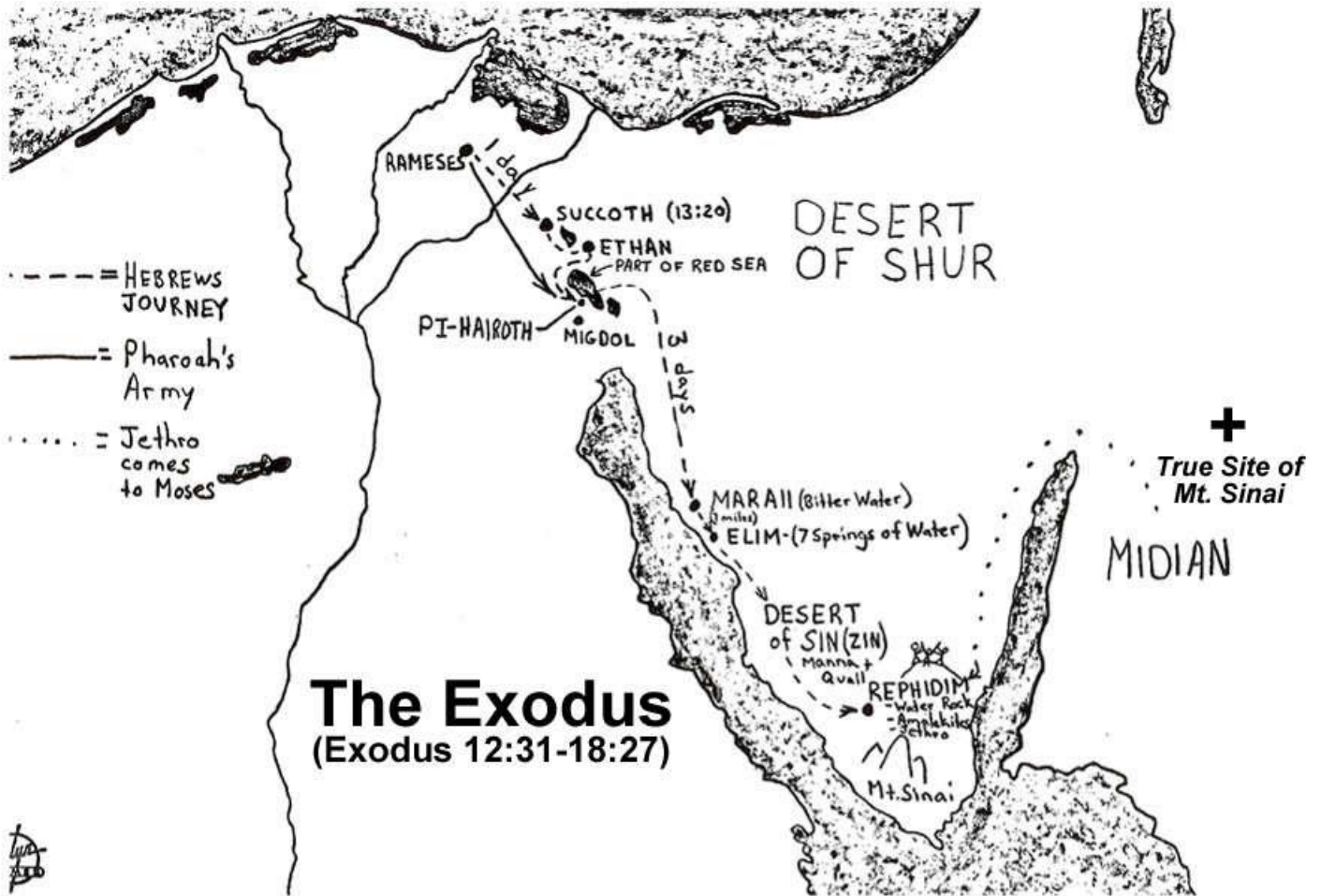
Two, *Meribah* which means “place of strife”. The location name of *Meribah* comes from the Hebrew word *rib* which, as is mentioned above, means “to strive” and “to contend”, and it is used as a technical legal term. It was at this location where the Israelites began legal proceedings against Moses, the Lord’s chosen leader.

At the end of this trial the Lord proved his faithfulness when Moses struck the rock where the Lord was standing with the same staff he had used to strike the Nile turning it to blood and death. (Exodus 7:20) Moses used the staff of judgment to strike the rock upon which the Lord was standing to provide water for the covenant people to drink.

“And the Lord said to Moses,...  
‘Take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile,  
and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb,  
and you shall strike the rock,

and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.  
 And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

- Exodus 17:6



*Exodus 17:1-7 - after leaving the Desert of Sin the Israelites were camped at Rephidim, but they had no water for 3 days. Moses called the place Massah and Meribah. Here Moses was told to strike the rock.*

Over the next forty years in the wilderness traveling and camping with the Lord the Israelites had daily needs provided and they were delivered from every difficulty and conflict. They were led by the Lord. During this forty year wilderness experience the Israelites saw the works of the Lord. But, also the Israelites were taught the knowledge of God by Moses on a daily basis. This fact is repeated in the following verses which cover 40 years in the wilderness where Moses continually taught the wilderness generation the Word of God – Exodus 20:9; Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 15:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 23:1; 24:1; 25:1; 27:1; Numbers 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 11:24; 14:39; 15:1; 15:37; 17:1; 19:1. The subjects Moses covered in his instruction were vast in that forty year period. The subjects Moses taught included the nature of God, the plans of God, the moral code of God, sins against God, sacrifices to restore fellowship with God, the governmental laws for the nation of God, the priestly rituals that would daily remind the people of the ways of God and the festivals that would encourage



the people of their future with God. This and much more concerning the knowledge of God was faithfully communicated to the wilderness generation for forty years by Moses.

A great illustration of the extensiveness of Moses teaching is recorded after the wilderness generation had all died and Moses held one last national teaching session for the younger second generation in the year 1405 BC. This historic class is recorded in Deuteronomy 31-32 and Moses' notes for this class were set to music and sung by Moses to the second generation so that they might easily remember and teach it to their children. Here's the beginning of this class:

“And the Lord said to Moses,...

‘Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel.

Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel.

For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey,  
which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat,  
they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.’

– Deuteronomy 31:19-20 (Deuteronomy 31:19-32:47)

In spite of the fact Moses had spent forty years teaching the wilderness generation, they did not learn or understand the knowledge of God. Their hearts were hard and rebellious. They did not inhale the words of God, so they could not exhale faith in God. So, when they were given the same “No Water” test in 1405 BC that they had been given forty years earlier in 1445 BC they failed the exam miserably with the same hardness and bitterness towards Moses and the Lord. In fact, their statements indicate their souls were delusional with worldly thinking that suppressed the knowledge of God since they remember Egypt, the land of their oppression, abuse and slavery, as good but they identify their resting place with the Lord as “this evil place”. They remember the land of their slavery as the good land with grain, figs, vines, pomegranates and water, but the wilderness, where the Lord has daily manifested God's works, Words and ways, as evil. They were calling evil good, and good evil. The account of this event is recorded in Numbers 20:1-13:

“And the people of Israel, the whole congregation,  
came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month,  
and the people stayed in Kadesh...

**Now there was no water for the congregation.**

And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

And **the people quarreled with Moses** and said,

“Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord!

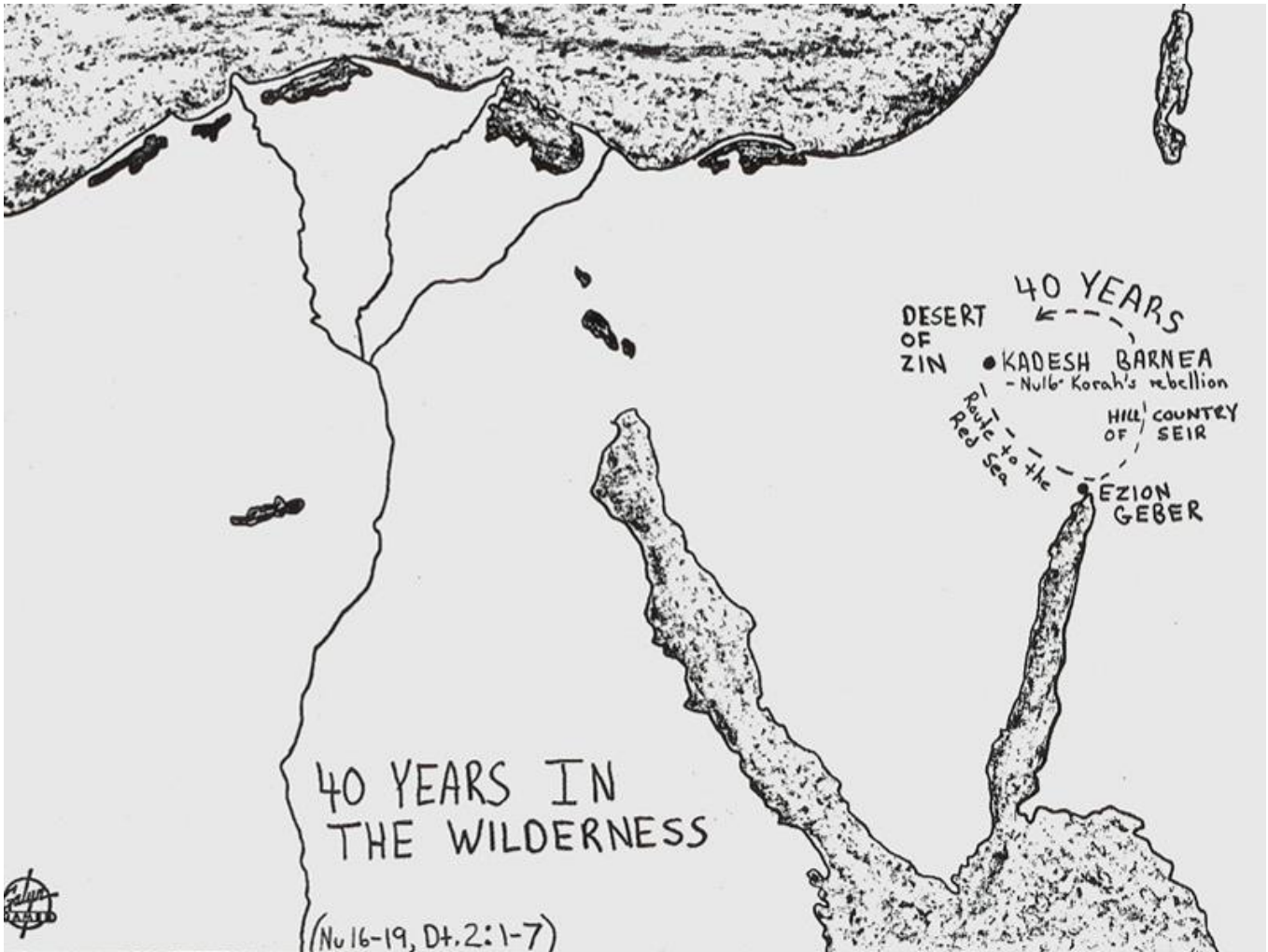
Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness,  
that we should die here, both we and our cattle?

And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?

It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of

meeting and fell on their faces.  
And the glory of the Lord appeared to them...”



*Numbers 20:1-13 occurs 40 years later. This Meribah is different than “Massah Meribah” of Exodus 17 which was just a few days outside of Egypt forty years earlier. This location was in the Desert of Zin while Israel was staying at Kadesh. Here Moses was told to speak to the rock, but instead he struck the rock. This was called the waters of Meribah because Israel quarreled with the Lord.*

The Israelite believers should have faced their “no water” problem resting in faith believing that the Lord had a plan, a purpose and a provision. They should have gained confidence in their soul over the last forty years by having seen and heard the Lord’s works, words and ways. But, there was no intake of these Truths into their disillusioned souls. After forty years of instruction and experience this generation should have been able to exhale faith in God from a soul inhaling Truth and resting in the knowledge of God. But, they had failed. It was going to be impossible for this generation to enter God’s rest. It was not that God was forbidding them entrance into his rest, but they had become incapable of entering his rest. Thus, David would write from Jerusalem inside the Promised Land 400 years later to warn his generation to avoid the same mistake and not miss the Lord’s rest. When David writes, he records the Lord’s words that explain the wilderness generation’s situation, “they have not known my ways, therefore I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” (Psalm 95:10-11) It wasn’t God punishing them, but God giving up on them after forty years of trying to get them into his rest. In this case after forty years of feeding and teaching these people the Lord said,

“They shall not enter my rest.” He wasn’t preventing them from entering. The fact that they could not enter God’s rest was the simple result of them refusing to learn the ways of the Lord. Since they refused to learn for forty years the opportunity was gone. It was over. They died and fell in the wilderness never having learned to trust their Creator, Deliverer and Provider. They missed out on living their lives in God’s rest and, it appears, they missed entering an eternal life of rest with the Lord, also.

In 63 AD a New Testament letter addressing the believers in the Jerusalem church, used the wilderness generation and David’s advice to his generation as a platform to call the believers to secure their souls in the rest of God. The believers around 63 AD in Jerusalem had faced persecution from the unbelieving Jews and were about 36 months away from the nation instigating a war with the Roman Empire that would result in the total overthrow of their culture, land and holy city. The believers being addressed in the book of Hebrews were oppressed by their culture and were headed into national overthrow. These believers needed more than just a religious concept of a home in heaven someday, they needed a living faith that not only guaranteed eternal life at some point in the future but also would secure their souls today while they lived in union with their Savior God through daily struggles, cultural oppression and national overthrow. Sure, they may have had hope in Christ for eternity, but would they collapse and put their God on trial the moment they faced hardship, persecution or the total loss of everything they had in the world? A true faith is enduring in life and in eternity. If your faith collapses in life, it is possible you really do not have faith for eternity. If the wilderness generation could not trust the Lord for water after they had seen him deliver them from Egypt, then it is possible for us to also reject the Lord in life even though we claim to have recognized his deliverance of us from sin and death. If the Lord has delivered you from sin and death to bring you into his eternal kingdom, then he also has a plan and purpose for everything you face in your life, good and bad. If you cannot handle life, then you need to learn God’s ways and make every effort to enter his rest. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Hear his Word and learn his ways. Prepare your soul for life today.

The writer of Hebrews wrote the words below around 63 AD to the believers in Jerusalem using David’s words of 1000 BC when David addressed the failure of the wilderness generation during the years of 1445-1405 BC:

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

‘Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the **rebellion**  
 (“Rebellion” from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew “*Meribah*” from “*rib*” meaning “argument” or “lawsuit”),

on the day of **testing** in the wilderness,  
 (“testing” from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew “*massah*” meaning “trial”, “test”)

where your fathers put me to the **test**  
 (“test” from Ps. 95:9 Hebrew “*nasah*” meaning “to test”, “to try”)

and saw my works for forty years.  
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,

and said, "They always go astray in their heart;  
they have not known my ways."  
As I swore in my wrath,  
"They shall not enter my rest." '

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,  
leading you to fall away from the living God.  
But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,'  
that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.  
For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.  
As it is said,

'Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'

For who were those who heard and yet rebelled?  
Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?  
And with whom was he provoked for forty years?  
Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?  
And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?  
So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands,  
let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.  
For good news came to us just as to them,  
but the message they heard did not benefit them,  
because they were not united by faith with those who listened.  
For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

'As I swore in my wrath,  
"They shall not enter my rest," '

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.  
For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way:  
'And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.'  
And again in this passage he said,

'They shall not enter my rest.'

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, 'Today,' saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

'Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.'

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.  
So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.**

**Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

For the word of God is living and active,  
sharper than any two-edged sword,  
piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,  
and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
And no creature is hidden from his sight,  
but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

- Hebrews 3:7 - 4:13

Interestingly, the words of the Hebrew author can sound contradictory when he writes “strive to enter that rest”. The word translated “strive” here in Hebrews 4:11 (Greek *spoudazo*) helps create this apparent oxymoron means “to make haste”, “to give diligence”, “be swift” and is translated “make every effort”. The believers in Jerusalem in 63 AD were to swiftly be diligent to make haste to “enter that rest”!

The writer of Hebrews is telling us that as long as today is called “today” we are to make every effort to enter God’s rest. The Lord has offered this rest to every generation in history. We enter that rest when we hear, understand and continually trust the Words of God. The Word of God reveals the ways, the plans and the purpose of the Lord. The Word of God gives us a solid foundation of the knowledge of God that we can hold in our minds to keep our souls at rest. This rest is the peace that passes understanding.

But, entering this rest is not automatic for a believer in Christ. Entering God’s rest is not instantaneous, it is not an emotion and it is not separated from knowing Truth. This rest is under assault and can be overwhelmed with worry, panic and fear when our souls begin to focus on the “wisdom of this age” and the deceitful scheming of the world. The Truth of the Word of God in our soul can be replaced with lies and deception. We need to make every effort to enter that rest and maintain that rest in our souls by concentrating on the knowledge of God that empowers us.

Do not let the pressures and the afflictions of this world cause you to retreat out of the strong tower built in your soul. It is in this strong tower filled with the knowledge of God the believer can rest in the promises, plans and purposes revealed in the knowledge of God.

## 05 – Faith Rest

In at least five places in Scripture people are invited to enter a place of rest for their souls by trusting the plan and promise of the Lord.

1. The Exodus Generation from 1445-1405 BC
2. David's Generation 1000 BC
3. Jeremiah's Generation 620-586 BC
4. Jesus' Generation in 30 AD
5. Believers in Jerusalem in 63-66 AD

### The Exodus Generation from 1445-1405 BC

- Exodus 33:14 “And he said ‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you **rest**.’ ”
- Joshua 1:13 – “Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, ‘The Lord your God is providing you a place of **rest** and will give you this land.’ ”

### David's Generation 1000 BC

- Psalm 95:11 – “Therefore I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my **rest**.’ ”

Both Jesus and Jeremiah spoke of this place of rest for a person's soul if that person could hear the words of God and learn God's ways:

### Jeremiah 620-586 BC

- Jeremiah 6:16 – “Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find **rest** for our souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ ”

### Jesus in 30 AD

- Matthew 11:28-29 – Jesus – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls.”

Just like in Jeremiah's day (620-583 BC), the people of Jesus' day (27-30 AD) would reject the Lord's offer of rest for their souls:

- Matthew 12:6-8, 14 – “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath... But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.”

### Believers in Jerusalem in 63-66 AD

- Hebrews 3:18 – “And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his **rest**, but to those who were disobedient?”

- 4:1 – “Therefore, while the promise of entering his **rest** still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.”
- 4:3 – “For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my **rest**’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.”
- 4:8 – “For if Joshua had given them **rest**, God would not have spoken of another day later on.”
- 4:9 – “So then, there remains a Sabbath **rest** for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also **rested** from his works as God did from his.
- 4:11 – “Let us therefore strive to enter that **rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.”

This place of rest for your soul occurs when we are confident in God’s plan. God’s rest is not found in external circumstances or achieved with internal distractions. The rest that the Lord invites us to is obtained and maintained by believing the promises of the Lord.

In 1445 BC the people were promised that the Lord would lead them through the wilderness to the land promised to their forefathers. In 1000 BC David spoke of trusting the Creator God to be the sustainer and provider of his people throughout their time. Between 620-586 BC Jeremiah encouraged his generation to return to the established Truth revealed to this people by God through the prophets and the writings of Moses. In 30 AD Jesus, the Living Word, invited the people to come to him and learn of him. In 63 AD the author of the book of Hebrews spoke to those who had heard and trusted in the promises of Jesus Christ. Each of these generations had people who secured their souls by trusting the Word of the Lord, but they also had large numbers who refused to listen, refused to understand and refused believe the clear words they heard.

Those who believed and maintained their confidence in the promises of God despite the opposition (perils of the wilderness, fears of life and persecution for believing the Truth) prepared their souls for rest. Those who understood and trusted the Word of God could stabilize themselves in the midst of confusion, problems and persecution. They would grow stronger. They would mature to produce fruit. And, their understanding and faith would grow.

Those who refused to believe or could not maintain their confidence in the Lord during times of confusion, problems or persecution were either eternally lost or could not grow into mature believers. They either perished for all eternity or lived fruitless lives in this age before their Lord.

Hear and understand the promises of the Lord today so that you may enter his rest.

*“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”*

- Isaiah 26:3

*“Have you not known?*

*Have you not heard?*

*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.”*  
- Isaiah 40:28-31

## **06 – God’s Ways and Promises (Preparing Your Soul)**

We have received God’s Word and heard his voice in our lives just as they did in the Exodus generation in 1445 BC, David’s generation in 1000 BC, Jeremiah’s generation in 600 BC, Jesus’ generation in 30 AD and the people living in Jerusalem who received the New Testament letter of Hebrews in 63 AD. Like them we have a choice to either receive or reject the Lord’s invitation into his rest. If we can understand these Words and trust God’s ways revealed in these promises then we will be able to stabilize our souls for rest and prepare our minds for action not only in the good times, but even in the worst times. We will be fruitful in season and out of season because we will have entered and stayed in God’s rest. This is absolutely necessary because the day of evil comes to each one of us individually or as a nation. We must prepare our souls now.

To do this we must first hear the promises and understand God’s ways. Today we have an opportunity to inhale the doctrines of Truth. If we do this we can live daily in God’s rest exhaling both the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

If you know the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit you will know that it involves much more than joy and peace, because not every situation in life demands joy and peace. Sometimes in the fallen world among those in rebellion to God we will need to be faithful, just, humble and good.

We will need to be faithful to the Lord even while everyone else is compromising his Word and twisting his created order. You will need to remain in God’s rest while you think and speak faithfully to his ways while you are mocked for not compromising and identified as evil for not twisting his created Reality. This will not be an easy fruit of the Spirit to produce if you have lost confidence in God and left the place of rest.

We will need to be just and seek justice even when culture is oppressive. We will need to be just and fair even when a bribe determines innocence or guilt. You will need to speak fairly, honestly and justly when the path to survival requires lies, compromise and betrayal. Are churches preparing your soul for moments like that? God’s word does, and he defends his word with his very nature and then, backs it up with a promise. You can be just in the midst of compromise and still maintain your place in the rest of God.

We will need to “walk humbly before our God” even when it is identified as arrogant and uncooperative by men who demand we bow before them. The humble cannot be weak. There is a



time when humility before the Lord will require you to rise up as mighty in the face of rebellious men. You will be in God's rest, but this will not be tolerated by those who do not understand that their momentary greatness in this age was given to them by the Lord. And, it is already passing away. Stay humble my friend and do not fear the lions!

We will need to be good even when men declare "good is evil" and identify "light as darkness". These will be difficult times. These will not be productive days for the "Christian" who has reduced his testimony to tolerate wickedness, cooperate with evil, live patiently in sin and find peace with the bad. A good man at this time will have to be a strong, confrontational man willing to live independently in the rest of his God. I am thinking more of a battle harden warrior than a religious social organizer.

## 07 - Zephaniah 2:1-3 – Perhaps You Will Be Hidden

“Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation,  
before the decree takes effect  
before the day passes away like chaff,  
before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord,  
before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord.  
**Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;**  
**seek righteousness;**  
**seek humility;**  
perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.”

- Zephaniah 2:1-3

Zephaniah prophesied to Judah and Jerusalem during the days of Jeremiah's ministry around 618 BC. This would be 9 years before Josiah's death in battle, 13 years before Nebuchadnezzar's first captivity of Judah which included the taking of Daniel to Babylon, and 32 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC. Zephaniah did not cry out telling the people to repent. He did not encourage the people to turn back to the Lord. Instead, Zephaniah spoke the Lord's message telling the people of Judah and Jerusalem that the day of their judgment and overthrow was set. There would be no national revival, because God's patience had already been exhausted. Judah had already been marked for slaughter. As the Lord says through Zephaniah:

**“I will utterly sweep away everything... (1:2)**  
**I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem...(1:4)**

### **Be silent before the Lord God!**

*(This means these people cannot defend their actions or their thoughts before the Lord, so they have nothing to say. Judgment is coming. Do not petition the Lord for mercy or seek forgiveness. They can only be silent in the face of the Lord's accusations.)*

**For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice**  
*(the sacrifice was to be the nation of Judah)*

**and consecrated his guests ...1:7**

*(The Babylonians who were going to destroy Judah and Jerusalem were the consecrated guests who would offer the sacrifice. This is similar to Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 46:1-10 where Egypt would be offered as a sacrifice by the Babylonians in 605 BC at the coming battle of Carchemish. Also, similar to Ezekiel 39:17.)*

**The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there...1:14  
Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation...2:1**

Jerusalem would be burnt by Babylon 32 years later in 586 BC.

The only encouragement or guidance the Lord gave the believers in Judah and Jerusalem (which would have included Jeremiah, Habakkuk, King Josiah, and a very young Daniel) was to prepare their souls. They were to fortify the fortress of their soul with the knowledge of God so they would be in the place of God's rest during the days and years leading up to the destruction that was guaranteed to come. In Zephaniah 2:1-3 the believers living in this "shameful nation" are identified as "*all you humble of the land who do his just commands*". In preparation for the coming days of God's anger and burning judgment these believers were told by Zephaniah to seek the Lord, seek righteousness and seek humility. They were to prepare themselves for impact. Brace yourself for national judgment. They were to seek the Lord and enter his rest. This is the same rest the wilderness generation and David's generation were invited to enter. If these believers of 618 BC would humbly seek the knowledge of the Lord their souls could remain at rest during the disasters that would take place over the next 32 years and all the events that would follow. Nine years after Zephaniah's words King Josiah would die in battle with Egypt. Then, the first Babylonian captivity would take place in 605 BC. This first captivity resulted in the members of the royal family (Daniel, etc.) being taken into Babylon for training. In 597 BC, twenty-one years later, King Jehoiachin, Ezekiel and the skilled craftsmen would be taken captive to Babylon. And, finally, after 20 years of Babylonian oppression (605-586 BC) the nation would fall and Jerusalem would be burnt. Zephaniah called the believers in Judah to prepare their souls for rest because perhaps there was a chance that believers could be hidden in God's rest during the next 32 years. The availability of this rest would depend on their souls being fortified with Truth and Reality.

The believers in Jerusalem in 618 BC were not promised supernatural deliverance or protection from the negative effects caused by cultural oppression, the coming famine, Babylonian siege, mass starvation, invasion of the city, destruction of homes or deportation to Babylon. Instead, they were told that if they sought the Lord, obeyed his commands, sought righteousness and sought humility then "**perhaps you may be** hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord".

Hidden from what?

The Babylonians?

No, because many righteous were taken in the captivities (605, 597 and 586 BC). These captives included Daniel in 605 BC and Ezekiel in 597 BC.

Would they be hidden from the famine and starvation?

No, because even Jeremiah suffered through times where bread was lacking including the famine of 598 and the siege of 588-586.

Would they be hidden in battle fighting for the righteous cause of the Lord?

No, because even Josiah, the righteous king, was killed in battle in the Jezreel Valley by Egyptian Pharaoh Neco on his way to help the fleeing, splintered Assyrian government in their final stand against the rising power of General Nebechadnezzar and his father Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon in 609 BC.

What does it mean that these believers in Jerusalem around 618 BC “perhaps may be” hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord? The phrase “perhaps may be” in the ESV translation comes from the Hebrew word *‘u-lay* which literally translates “it may be that”. This is not a promise that you “will be” hidden, but is a condition based on your level of success in five areas described in the same verse:

1. Seek the Lord
2. Be humble
3. Do what the Lord commands
4. Seek righteousness
5. Seek humility

These are five characteristics of a person who is renewing their mind with the Truth of God’s words and transforming their soul into the image of Christ. They were the ones who would understand God’s promises and be empowered by his Truth. They would have the capacity in their souls to trust God’s ways even in times of distress and confusion. Those who seek the Lord will learn of him. Those who humble themselves will lay down their false ideas and corrupted worldviews. With their mind on Christ they will be able to enter into God’s rest continuing to be righteous in deed and humble before the Lord. They will be able to hold on to the promises of God because they know God’s ways, they know God’s character and they know their role in preparing for the coming eternal Kingdom. They will not faint. They will not give up. They will stand on the day of evil. And, when they have done all to stand, they will continue to stand. (Eph. 6:13-14)

There was a chance that the believers facing these evil days could do so with a soul fully at rest in God, fortified with faith in the knowledge of God. These believers would have prepared their souls to face the evil lion and would be ready for either deliverance or for death without losing their faith, their confidence or the rest in their souls. They will maintain the peace that passes understanding.

Of course, if they do not seek the Lord or do not know his Word and his Ways, they will be like the seed sown along the side of the road or in the weeds. (Matt. 13:20-23) They will not be able to produce the fruits of righteousness because of one of these two conditions:

One, their roots are too shallow and when the sun rises their plant is scorched. (Matt. 13:5-6) According to Jesus this means, “he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.” The believer at

rest, having trusted the promises and knowing the ways of the Lord, will not alter their confidence or confession in the midst of hardships or when they are being persecuted because of their confidence. The believer with no rest and no understanding of the Bible will quickly fold, not only in the face of persecution, but merely in the midst of a storm. Their house (soul, mind) should be on the rock (hearing Jesus' words and doing them, Matt. 7:24-25), but instead their house (soul, mind) is on the sand ("who hears these words of mine and does not do them.", Matt. 7:26-27)

Two, the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches are the weeds that grew in the soil intended to grow the seeds of the Word of God. A mind overwhelmed with worry or over confident of temporal control will also prevent the production of righteous fruit. (Matt. 13:7, 22) Both the worries of life and the confidences in life will choke the Truth. Being overly concerned about worldly problems and overly confident of worldly power will absorb the resources in the soul that are intended to be given to the Word of God. Without Truth a person cannot enter God's rest because their thinking is empty. In vanity they continue to worry about things they cannot control, or in their vain imagination they trust in false concepts that merely gives them an illusion of being in control. Both worldly fears and temporal confidences will choke your soul by preventing you from inhaling the promises of God. This, like having no root, will keep you from entering into God's rest.

If you do not hear the Word of God, you do not know the Word of God.

If you do not know the Word of God, you cannot know God's ways.

If you do not know God's ways, you will easily and quickly decide the world's ways are the best ways but they are the ways of the false "god" or idol you have set in your soul in the place of the Lord. The ignorant believer will be scorched with heat like a plant with shallow roots in gravel. The believer focused on either the troubles of this age or the powers of this age will stop inhaling Truth, and they will choke like a plant trying to survive in the weeds.

The believer who knows, understands and trusts the Word of God will produce God's rest in their soul. (Matt. 13:8-9, 23) They will be "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.." (Psalm 1:3)  
Today is the day to prepare your soul.

*"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

Hebrews 3:15

*"While the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it."*

Hebrews 4:1

*"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active."*

Hebrews 4:11-12

## 08 – Two Great Promises

God's "eternal power and divine nature" are clearly understood since they are revealed in creation itself. Our own selves and the world we live in reveal God's power and his character. Those of us educated by and conformed to the modern Western culture may have a hard time accepting the fact this evidence exists in nature because we think as secular humanist. Yet it is true. Creation itself testifies not only to the existence of God, but also to his eternal power. The creation provides details of God's personal character (such as organized, creative, well planned, caring, provider, personal, eternal, transcendent, and more.) There is also detailed revelation that has been recorded from the beginning of time in written form and collected in what we call the Word of God, or the Bible. In the text of Scripture the plan of God and greater detail of his eternal character are revealed. This revelation or information in the Word of God can be classified as promises of God. Now, not every "promise" in the Word of God is what we would desire in our fallen human nature. The natural man may not consider man of God's promises as positive.

Some of the promises in the Bible are similar to what we would use if we had three wishes from a genie in a bottle. These promises in the Word of God guarantee for us what God is going to do for us. These promises of God may be manifest in our temporal lives being fulfilled in a moment, or in days, months or, eventually, years.

But, some of the promises of God come with qualifying words like "wait for it" and require us to possess certain character traits such as endurance, patience, faithfulness, confidence. Some of these promises are given along with phrases such as "in that day", "in due season", "do not give up", and "these died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar."

I will identify a few of the promises of God we have available to us in the Word of God here in the next few chapters. I would like to begin with two overall summary statements. The first is:

God is good.

This is a foundational insight and it is always true. This fact is independent of your feelings, opinion, situation or environment. The bedrock truth that God is good is confirmed several places in the Bible:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" – 1 Chronicles 16:34

"...giving thanks to the Lord: 'For He is good.'" – Ezra 3:11

"Good and upright is the Lord." – Psalm 25:8

"No one is good but One, that is, God" – Jesus quoted in Mark 10:18

"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." – James 1:17

Understanding and trusting the fact that our Lord, the Creator God, is good is absolutely necessary for a person to enter into the rest of God. In spite of evil in the world and sin in our own hearts, God's goodness, his eternal character, is active in our world and in our lives. We must come to grips with the reality that light, truth and life can exist simultaneously in a temporal world where darkness, deception and death exist. The presence of darkness does not prove light does not exist, because the existence of light is necessary for darkness to even be defined. Light is a thing, darkness is a non-thing, because darkness is merely the absence of light. You have a light switch, but you do not turn on the dark with a dark switch. If there was no truth, then deception would not be deceitful because you first need truth to pervert to have deception. Something cannot be made dead unless you mean life has been taken away. Darkness, deception and death are non-things. For them to exist you have to have removed light, truth and life. Likewise, there actually is no mystery with the concept that God is eternally good even when we experience bad in life. In fact, a large portion of God's promises involve him defeating evil and destroying death daily in our lives and bringing about utter annihilation of anything in rebellion to his "good" nature. God does this by being good.

To have faith in God and to enter into his rest your soul will have to hear, understand and believe that God is good. If you cannot accept this promise, then you cannot have faith in the true God and you will never enter his rest.

"Without faith it is impossible to please him,  
for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and  
that he rewards those who seek him." – Hebrews 11:6

The second overall summary statement we need to understand and believe to begin entering into God's rest in our souls is:

If you seek God, you will find God.

The Bible teaches us that if we seek to understand God he will reveal himself to us. The second great Bible promise is that if you decide to seek the Lord then you will find him. God is not hiding. If anyone is hiding it is mankind. In the Garden of Eden it was Adam who hid himself from God, because Adam knew the truth. Adam knew he had sinned, so Adam hid.

The opposite of seeking the truth is suppressing the truth. The fact that God is driving out sin, evil, darkness and death is a basic truth revealed to all mankind through creation itself. But, men, just like Adam, are fearful of this truth because man is by nature in rebellion to God (including God's goodness). In fear men will suppress the truth to help them maintain a sense of sanity because naturally they know God is bringing wrath and judgment on evil and sin.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven  
against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,  
who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." – Hebrews 1:18

So, what may be known about God is revealed and available for those who want to seek and find the Lord. This second promise is a great promise. Not only is God good, but if you want to find this good God he promises that you will find him.

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.” – Proverbs 8:17

“From there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him,  
if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.” – Deuteronomy 4:29

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” – Jeremiah 29:13

Jesus said: “I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you;  
seek, and you will find;  
knock, and it will be opened to you.  
For everyone who asks receives,  
and the one who seeks finds,  
and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” – Luke 11:9-10

The first two great promises from the Word of God, and even declared by creation itself:

1. God is good.
2. If you seek God, you will find him.

You may begin preparing your soul to enter the rest of God by hearing, knowing and trusting these two promises. These two promises will fortify your mind during times of trouble or confusion and prevent the invasion of lies, deceit and corrupted ideologies that contradict the nature of God and his availability.

Remember, these promises are true. God’s very Word and his reputation defend them. No matter what the world shows you or what deception tells you, the Word of God is living and active standing eternal over all creation with God himself.

“For the word of God is living and active,  
sharper than any two-edged sword,  
piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,  
and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
And no creature is hidden from his sight,  
but all are naked and exposed  
to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” – Hebrews 4:11-12

Begin to know these promises and remember them. Concentrate on these two promises. These two truths will stabilize your soul in good or bad times, in life or death, and in the light or in darkness.

There are more promises with more detail revealed in Scripture. We will now take a look at more of these promises that reveal the Ways of the Lord that will help us anchor our souls and maintain our place in the rest of God.

## 09 – The Promises: Knowing God’s Ways

Some promises include temporal blessings and daily provisions in life.

Other promises include a call to service, endurance and the sacrifice of temporal blessings in order to achieve God’s plan as we run the race of life marked out for us.

In the first case the manifestation of the promise is received with thanksgiving in this lifetime. In this second case the blessings and provisions are future.

These two types of promises are distinguished in Hebrews 11 where a rather extensive list of believers leading up to the time of Jesus Christ are commended. Some of these believers had faith to trust God for temporal blessings and daily deliverance. But, others denied the temporal blessing and endured hardships in order to achieve God’s plan for themselves at that time in history.

The writer of Hebrews identifies 10 situations where believers received deliverance, provisions and took leadership to accomplish God’s temporal plan. In Hebrews 11:33-35 these heroes of faith accomplished these things and received these blessings in their life in this world:

1. Conquered kingdoms
2. Enforced justice
3. Obtained promises
4. Stopped mouths of lions
5. Quenched the power of fire
6. Escaped the edge of the sword
7. Made strong out of weakness
8. Became mighty in war
9. Put foreign armies to flight
10. Received dead back to life

These believers knew God’s promises, understood God’s ways. They did not compromise God’s Truth or the Reality he had created. They were faithful, endured and received deliverance and provision in this world.

These events and provisions are true. Events and provisions like these are available today. God is good and he promises to lead us, provide for us, protect us and empower us to fulfill our lives. Our responsibility is to know God’s promises, know God’s ways, trust God and endure until he manifests his power and his purpose. These things are accomplished by God as we hold onto his promises by faith and trust him.

After the author of Hebrews identifies these 10 glorious accomplishments of believers in Hebrews 11:33-35 he immediately continues with another list of 15 events in Hebrews 11:36-38 where



believers were not delivered, they were not “blessed” with temporal glories and they lived subpar to normal human standards because they also knew God’s promises, understood God’s ways and were willing to endure temporal defeats in order to remain faithful to God’s purpose for their lives. These believers faced with great endurance, patience and faith these things listed in Hebrews 11:36-38 because the good God called them to this:

1. Tortured
2. Refused release
3. Suffered mocking
4. Suffered flogging
5. Chains
6. Imprisonment
7. Stoned
8. Sawn in two
9. Killed with the sword
10. Went about in skins of sheep and goats
11. Destitute
12. Afflicted
13. Mistreated
14. Wandering in deserts and mountains
15. Dwelt in dens and caves

These believers were not spiritual losers, but instead were victorious overcomers who knew the promises of God and knew God’s ways. They were unwilling to compromise their faith in the Truth or their knowledge of God’s Reality. But, instead of being delivered in this temporal world God allowed these believers to manifest their faith in the midst of hardship. God called these believers to testify to his absolute Truth without denying the Lord. They all suffered and perished in this age without compromising their knowledge, understanding and faith in the good God.

These events and sufferings are also true. Events and sufferings like this occur today. God is good and he promises to lead us, provide for us, protect us and empower us while we endure such mistreatment. Our responsibility is to know God’s promises, know God’s ways, trust God and endure until he manifests his power and his purpose. These things are accomplished by God when we have faith. Great will be your reward in eternity.

## 10 – Promises of Provisions and Deliverance

Promises for daily life and provisions

Describe and list many of the promises and provisions for daily life accessible today.

Knowing and trusting these will allow the believer to remain calm and confident in God’s rest.

1. **Isaiah 41:10** – “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

2. **Isaiah 41:13** – “For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.”
3. **Isaiah 43:2** – “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”
4. **Isaiah 54:17** – “No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”
5. **Psalms 32:8** – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”
6. **Psalms 37:23-24** – “The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.”
7. **Exodus 14:14** – “The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”
8. **Joshua 1:9** – “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”
9. **Philippians 4:19** – “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
10. **Psalms 27:1** – “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”
11. **Psalms 34:17** – “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”
12. **Psalms 37:4** – “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
13. **Psalms 50:15** – “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”
14. **Psalms 9:9-10** – “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.”
15. **Psalms 103:2-5** – “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”
16. **Psalms 91** –
17. **James 5:14-15** – “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”
18. **Matthew 6:31-33** – “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
19. **Romans 8:31-35** – “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”

20. **2 Peter 1:3-4** – “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

21. **Philippians 4:13** – “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

22. **Hebrews 13:5-6** – “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

## 11 - The Promises: Knowing God's Ways

### #1 – Future Glory (Romans 8:18-19)

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.  
For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.”  
- Romans 8:18-19

### #2 – Strength in Weakness (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.  
But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’  
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses,  
so that Christ's power may rest on me.  
That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight  
in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.  
For when I am weak, then I am strong.  
- 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

### #3 – Everything Leads You to God's Goodness (Romans 8:28)

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,  
who have been called according to his purpose.”  
- Romans 8:28

### #4 – Rescued from Every Evil Attack (2 Timothy 4:17-18)

“The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength,  
so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.  
And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.  
The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.  
To him be glory for ever and ever.”

#5 – **Endurance** (Hebrews 12:1-2)

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,  
looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,  
who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,  
and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- Hebrews 12:1-2

#6 – **The Appointed Time...Wait for It** (Habakkuk 2:3)

“The vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.  
If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.”

- Habakkuk 2:3

“At the set time that I appoint  
I will judge with equity.”

- Psalm 75:2

“He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness  
through a Man whom He has appointed,  
having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.”

- Acts 17:31

#7 – **Discipline** (Hebrews 12:3-11)

“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant,  
but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness  
to those who have been trained by it.”

- Hebrews 12:11

“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?”

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reprovved by him.  
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they

disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”

#### #8 – **God Controls Government and Nations** (John 19:11)

“You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”  
- Jesus in John 19:11

“There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”  
- Romans 13:1

“By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just.” – Proverbs 8:15

“Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”  
- Psalm 2:10-12

“He changes times and seasons;  
he removes kings and sets up kings;  
he gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have understanding.”  
- Daniel 2:21

“It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.”  
- Jeremiah 27:5-7

“Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”  
- Jeremiah 25:12-14

**#9 – Understanding: The One Who Has, Will be Given More** (Matthew 13:12)

“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,  
but to them it has not been given.  
For to the one who has, more will be given,  
and he will have an abundance,  
but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.  
This is why I speak to them in parables,  
because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”  
- Matthew 13:11-13

**#10 – Wisdom** (James 1:5)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,  
who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”  
- James 1:5

“Wisdom cries aloud in the street,  
in the markets she raises her voice;  
at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;  
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.”  
- Proverbs 1:20-21

“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God,  
that we might understand the things freely given us by God.  
And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit,  
interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.  
The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him,  
and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”  
- 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

**11 – Secure** (Romans 8:35-39)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?  
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?  
As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.  
For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers,  
nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”  
- Romans 8:35-39

**12 – Empowered in Contentment** (Philippians 4:11-13)

“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.  
I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.  
In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret  
of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.  
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”  
- Philippians 4:11-13

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have,  
for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”  
- Hebrews 13:5

## 12 – Prayer and Asking God

It is good and right for us to go to God to request things we desire and to ask for his intervention in our lives. Going to God is not a weakness, and it is not self-centered or greedy. Seeking God’s provision, guidance and involvement in our life is something the Bible tells us to do. It is only faith in God that could even allow our soul to consider the possibility that the Almighty Creator of the universe and Judge of all mankind would hear and care about our prayers. It is obedient to ask God for help.

“Do not be anxious about anything,  
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 understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”  
- Philippians 4:6-7

Knowing the fact that God will respond to our requests will anchor our souls in God’s rest. When we bring our concerns to our Lord, as Paul writes in the verse above, “the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds” (or, “guard your souls”). Knowing God is going to respond to our prayers will secure our soul (heart and mind). We do not pray because we are too weak to face Reality. We pray

because we want our Creator and Savior involved in situations and with people that are important to us. In my life I want the Almighty Creator active in the Reality he has designed.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,  
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”  
- Hebrews 4:16

God’s nature is to respond to our requests. It is impossible for God not to respond with some form of reply. Jesus understood this and taught this when he said:

“Ask, and it will be given to you;  
seek, and you will find;  
knock, and it will be opened to you.  
For everyone who asks receives,  
and the one who seeks finds,  
and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”  
- Matthew 7:7-8

We are being held back when we do not seek, or we do not ask, or we do not knock.

It is also possible that when we ask we are only willing to accept one particular answer from the Eternal Almighty God. Imagine a three year old asking for and only accepting a peanut butter sandwich for their meal when their parent is also a gourmet chef! This child’s meal options are fantastic and their parent has dedicated their life to the skill of preparing meals. How shallow is the child’s appreciation of their parent’s skill. As the child grows and matures they will develop the ability and palate to be willing to accept and appreciate more than a peanut butter sandwich for lunch.

A similar example could be presented of a three year old only wanting a bowl of sugar cereal for breakfast when their parent is a nutritionist. The three year old’s constant demand for sugary cereal would result in all kinds of weakness, malnutrition, underdevelopment, anemic behavior. The list of deficiencies of the poor diet is endless and will affect the child’s life. But, the good parent who is the nutritionist would be able to provide a healthy meal with the correct nutrition, and also make the meal pleasant and desirable for a three year old. But, the three year old is first needs to trust their parent and taste the food.

We’ve all been three year olds and we have all been around three year olds, so we understand why the three year old can develop a narrow list of acceptable foods. In real life the three year old grows up and their experiences with food change and develop. It is also necessary for us to grow up spiritually and be willing to look at the larger menu the Lord presents to us.

The child who has a parent that is a chef or a nutritionist needs to learn there are better options for their meal than sugar cereal and peanut butter sandwiches. Likewise a believer who is asking the Creator of the universe, who is seeking intervention from the Eternal God Almighty and who is knocking for help to come from the Lord and King Jesus Christ who willing was crucified to deliver them from sin, death and damnation, also has something better on the menu than our limited spiritual desires of a three-year-old-like believer.



Go to God, know he will respond. And, trust his answer to your prayers and requests.

With the above understanding meditate on this verse:

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer,  
believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

- Mark 11:24

## **13 – Thoughts and Truth**

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh

but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God,

and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”

– 2 Corinthians 10:2-6

**“We walk in the flesh”** or **“We live in this world (flesh)”** means that believers are living their natural lives as all people do in history. They are in the world experiencing both the limits and advantages of being mortal humans. They are limited in the fact they grow old and die, but they have the advantage of enjoying life and impacting history. They are responsible for the things of this life, but subject to the laws and limitations of nature. Believers live in the world because their temporal existence is like all mankind. Everyone is expected to meet obligations, accept responsibility and participate in the institutions of this age such as marriage, family, government and nations. It is true that believers are not to live their lives by the fallen standards of this world, but that expectation does not change the fact they still have the full experience of living their lives in this world.

The separation of the believer’s experience from the unbeliever’s occurs in their soul. What do they know? What do they think? What do they believe? What is Reality and Truth?

Even though the believer is in the world they are not of this world. The believer may be in this world, but they do not teach and promote their concept of Truth and Reality like the world does. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that **“We are not waging war according to the flesh”** or **“We do not wage war as the world does”**. The word **“war”**, which is *strateuometha* in the Greek and comes from *strateuo*, means “to be a soldier”, “to serve as a soldier”. It often means serving as a soldier at their own expense. In context of 1 Corinthians 10 this refers to the ministry, activity and struggles of Paul’s calling to be an apostle and to advance the understanding of the Gospel among the Gentiles. But, in application to ourselves this provides guidance for the entire approach we take in our lives including personal, family, work, social and church.

The phrase translated **“weapons of our warfare”** or **“weapons we fight with”** is formed as follows:

The word **“warfare”** is *strateias* in the Greek and means “warfare”, “military expedition” and “military campaign”

The word **“weapons”** is *opla* in the Greek meaning “weapon” or “instrument of warfare.” This is a very general word for both offensive and defensive weapons. The list of spiritual weapons in Ephesians 6:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8 would be descriptive of this word and how it is used here by Paul:

“Take up **the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,  
and having done all, to stand firm.  
Stand therefore, having fastened on the **belt of truth**,  
and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, and,  
as **shoes for your feet**, having put on the readiness given by **the gospel of peace**.  
In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith**,  
with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;  
and take the **helmet of salvation**,  
and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**,  
praying at all times in the Spirit, with **all prayer and supplication**.”  
- Ephesians 6:13-18

“Since we belong to the day, let us be sober,  
having put on the **breastplate of faith and love**,  
and for a **helmet the hope of salvation.**”

- 1 Thessalonians 5:8

The “**weapons of the world**” or “**weapons of the flesh** (*sarkika*)” would be the weapons the common man uses to inflict their ideologies and philosophies on others. Besides instruction and proclamation by mankind, these weapons include coercion, deception, manipulation, use of physical force, etc. to build strongholds in the mind to support false ideologies and empty philosophies.

The greater weapons are available to the believer for private and public use. The believers’ weapons have divine power since their source is rooted in God’s divine nature. These divinely powered weapons we use clearly reveal Truth and Reality to all mankind. This absolute Reality that we profess to the world has already been revealed to all mankind in Creation. We simply need to re-identify it and testify to it. The special revelation of Truth recorded in Scripture should be presented by believers to the world, but it also must be illuminated by the Spirit of God for full understanding.

Our weapons are the clear presentation of God’s created Reality and the proclamation of God’s written revelation. The believer’s strategy is threefold:

One, the believer must understand, believe and concentrate on the Truth in their own souls.

Two, the believer must proclaim the Truth in words for others to hear. This will encourage other believers and has the potential of setting free those taken captive by the world’s philosophies and Satan’s strategies.

Three, the believer must live a righteous life before both God and man. This lifestyle must be in agreement with Reality and Truth.

The believer who will be successful in this warfare must have all three - their thinking, their words and their actions - aligned with Reality and Truth.

When Paul writes that our weapons have “**divine power**” the Greek literally says “powerful to God”. The words are “powerful” (*dunata*) from *dunatos* in the Greek meaning “strong”, “mighty”, and “powerful”. The Greek *theo* is translated “**of God**” indicating these weapons are employed on God’s behalf and have God’s personal interest involved.

These weapons of ours “**demolish strongholds**”. The word “**demolish**” is from the Greek *kathairesin* meaning “overthrow”, “tear down”, “pull down” and “destroy.” These weapons are destroying “strongholds”. “The word “**strongholds**” is from the Greek *oxuromaton* meaning “stronghold” or “fortress”. In the papyri documents from the time the New Testament was being written the word meant “prison”. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) that Paul was familiar, and often used among the Greek speaking Gentiles, uses the same word for “stronghold” in Proverbs 21:22 when it says in the English translation:

“A wise man scales the city of the mighty and  
brings down the **stronghold** (*oxuroma*) in which they trust.”

- Proverbs 21:22

It is obvious that Paul knew this verse and sees the “wise man” defeating the stronghold of the “mighty” with wisdom and thought instead of physical violence or military strength. Although Paul uses an intense collection of six military terms - “waging war” (10:3), “weapons”, “warfare”, “destroy strongholds” (10:4), “taking captives” (10:5) and “punish disobedience (court-martial)” (10:6) – in these four verses the context places the battle in the arena of academia instead of physical military force. Although six military images are presented the warfare they are engaged in is identified with six descriptors that involve the soul – arguments, opinions, knowledge, thoughts, and “not the flesh (world)” but “divine power”. In the proverb above (Proverbs 21:22) the single wise man (singular in the Hebrew) with spiritual virtue will scale the entire fortress of false realities defended by the self-confident mighty warriors (plural in the Hebrew, *gibbor* meaning “mighty men” or “warriors”) who use spiritual vices such as systematic deceit, public censure, social oppression and lawlessness to fortify their seemingly undefeatable stronghold.

The phrase translated “**demolish arguments and every pretension**” is formed as follows:

- The word “**demolish**” is translated from *kathairountes* which means “to tear down, to destroy”.
- The word “**arguments**” is from the Greek word *logismous* which means “calculation”, “reasoning”, “reflection”, “thought.”
- The word “**pretension**” or “**high thing**” is from the Greek word *upsoma* which means men have crafted an apparent superior way other than God’s Reality. This crafty ideology becomes their lofty high-mindedness where there is no room for the knowledge of God. In fact, the very mention of God Almighty is so far beneath their lofty high-mindedness that they find God disgusting. They consider it appalling to allow the Lord to be mentioned alongside their own achievements, ideologies and plans. Recognition of “the knowledge of God” offends them. The terms “god” or “lord” are only used by them if the image of God has been twisted and perverted into their own image and agrees with their own agenda. In this case their “jesus” or “god” has become an idol with a false philosophy.
- This “pretension” or “high thing” is further identified by Paul as “**rising up**”. This phrase comes from the Greek word *epairomenon* which means “that which is lifted high and exalted”. This means men have crafted something above the knowledge of God and are continuing to raise it up in a more lofty, pronounced, dominant position where it will replace all of God’s created Reality and revealed truth.

The image created by this phrase of translated Greek words – “demolish arguments and every pretension” - is that of walls and towers standing defiantly against God’s Created Reality and His revealed Truth. These walls and towers made of deceptive words, false realities and empty philosophies have been built by the world systems. But, the weapons of the believer, which include the understanding, profession and lifestyle of Truth and Reality, will tear down these military fortresses of deceit that have been constructed in their own soul and in the souls of other people that have been taken captive by the lies and twisted ideologies of the world.

*Logismous kathairountes kai pan hypsoma epairomenon kata tes gnoseos tou Theou*  
**arguments overthrowing and every high thing lifting itself up against the knowledge of God**

The world's "**arguments**" and "**every high thing lifting itself up**" is coming against the "**knowledge of God.**" Since these false thoughts and corrupt ideas are coming "**against the knowledge of God**" (10:5) it is understandable that God has unleashed his armor and empowered the weapons of the believer's warfare with the "**power of God**" (10:4).

The Lord and Creator will have the victory and will "**take captive every thought**" that has come "**against the knowledge of God.**" If not now in history, then when Jesus returns:

"At the name of Jesus **every knee** should bow,  
of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,  
and that **every tongue** should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

-Philippians 2:10-11

"**Every thought**" is to be taken captive after the divinely powered weapons of thought, word and righteous life style destroy every argument and every opinion that has raised itself above the knowledge of God and which supported every thought against Christ.

The word "**thought**" is the Greek *noema* which means "design", "purpose", "scheme", "mind" or "thought." These "thoughts" refer to man's supposed wisdom without God (fools) and Satan's strategies against God. These "thoughts" are the cleverness of man that absolutely convince men they do not need the Lord in life or death. These thoughts that are void of the knowledge of God become false philosophies which are the idols to which men bow today. This is evident in 2 Corinthians where the same Greek word *noema* is also used by Paul:

"That we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his **designs** (*noema*)."  
- 2 Corinthians 2:11

"Their **minds** (*noema*) were hardened.  
For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted,  
because only through Christ is it taken away."  
- 2 Corinthians 3:14

"In their case the god of this world has blinded the **minds** (*noema*) of the unbelievers,  
to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,  
who is the image of God."  
- 2 Corinthians 4:4

"I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning,  
your **thoughts** (*noema*) will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."  
- 2 Corinthians 11:3

These "thoughts", "minds", or "designs" (*noema*) are to be destroyed by the divinely empowered weapons given to the believer by the Lord. These divine weapons are your thoughts, words and actions that are aligned with the Creator's Reality and God's revealed Truth (the Word of God). Both Jesus and Paul did more than quote passages from the Scripture when they taught or debated. They used logic, natural evidence, reasoning and arguments to prove their intellectual positions and

teardown their opponent's faulty concepts. Jesus and the apostles saw themselves in a war for the thought and understanding in the souls of men.

The phrase “**take captive**” is the translation of the Greek *aichmalotizontes* which means “to take one captive with a spear”, “to bring into captivity” or “to bring into subjections”. The present tense of this Greek word in this verse indicates a continual struggle and an ongoing warfare. The intention of the weapons given to the believer is that those people who have been taken captive by Satan's schemes and the lofty, high-minded reasoning of mankind might be set free. Or, as Paul says, tear down the arrogant arguments in the souls of captive men and “take every thought captive to obey Christ”. In other words, take captive captivity with the knowledge of God's Reality and Truth. In Christ these captives will be free, because “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

## 14 – Countering False Ideologies

This chapter will list many of the false concepts that present a contrary view of Reality and Truth. Alongside each will be brief statements that:

- A. Describe the godless side of the philosophy
- B. “tear down” the structure of the basic false idea or empty philosophy using:
  - a. First, natural revelation, Reality, Creation
  - b. Second, special revelation, Scripture, Bible
- C. Provide an alternative answer or behavior from Reality and Truth that actually fills the gap that the false ideology is glorified by man as filling.

Such topics as:

1. **Materialism** – a theory stating physical matter is the only reality and all existence, process and occurrences are the result of matter including human consciousness.
  - a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –  
The position of materialism is self-defeating because “human consciousness”, or the mind, cannot analyze physical matter or form thoughts concerning physical matter if it is merely physical matter itself. The “thought” produced by matter must be over and above matter itself. Mind can only transcend matter if it is more than matter. Supporters of materialism want other people to agree with their views, but how can anyone disagree with them if their views are correct because, according the materialist position, human consciousness is simply the result of the flow of electrons and not the thoughts of free human souls. This theory is self-defeating in Reality. (Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics” by Norman L. Geisler, Baker Books, 1999; page 445, “Materialism”)
  - b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
  - c. Alternative Answer -
2. **Idealism** – a theory stating that mind and consciousness construct reality.
  - a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –  
There is no way for a person operating from the position of idealism to rationally accept that things perceived actually exist without the mind. For example, idealism claims color and sound are perceptions and cannot exist in any physical way since they exist only within a mind. The famous declaration of idealism is “to be is to be perceived.” Thus,

perception gives things existence. Now you decide. Is the book or electronic device you are reading this on an actual thing made of matter that will continue to exist if your mind ceases to function? If this book or device does not cease to exist when your mind and your senses stop perceiving it then idealism is incorrect.

- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
  - i. Genesis 1:1 – God creates the actual physical universe
  - ii. Genesis 2:7 – God creates both the material and immaterial part of man
- c. Alternative Answer -

3. **Atheism** – the word “a-theism” means “no-belief in god(s)” (“a-” means “no”; “theism” means “belief in the existence of god(s)”

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –  
All design implies a designer. Since the universe, genetics, the human body, mathematics and much more have order and design there must be a designer. All these things cannot come into order by random chance. That Designer is God. Also, since something does exist instead of nothing at all there must be a cause for things existing. The universe was caused to exist in its beginning and something is causing the universe to continue to exist. Things are not self-creating and self-sustaining. That Cause is God. Science, mathematics and time demonstrate there was a beginning. Time cannot go backwards forever. There cannot be an infinite numbers counting back. At some point there had to be a beginning. This beginning of the universe is identified by science as big bang cosmology. This is seen scientifically today in the “red shift” or Doppler Effect seen three ways. One, in light from stars as they continue to move away from their point of beginning. Two, the radiation echo from space with the same wavelength expected from the cosmic explosion at the beginning. And, three, discovery of a mass of energy as expected from the beginning big bang. This beginning is God’s Word in Genesis 1. (Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics” by Norman L. Geisler, Baker Books, 1999; p.276-277, “Evidence for God”)

- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

4. **Agnosticism** – a view that declares that human reason cannot rationally know or be certain of the existence of God, divine beings or even, the supernatural

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
  - i. Psalm 19 – the heavens declare the glory of God
  - ii. Romans 1:18-20 – God is revealed and knowable

- c. Alternative Answer -

5. **Evolution** – Cosmic evolution believes that matter has eternally existed and the state of our universe today evolved over a long period of time out of this eternal matter. The simple structures that existed billions of years ago have evolved on through forces of energy into stars, planets, life forms, human beings and modern technology. Biological evolution divides into both micro-evolution and macro-evolution. Micro-evolution is the process where various forms of life adapt to their environment. This is natural selection where the desirable genes of one generation of a species are passed onto the next generation. Macro-evolution is the concept that evolution occurred on a large scale taking a microbe and evolving it into a human

being. The process would still be occurring as human beings would now slowly be evolving into the next highest level of being.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

6. **Racism** – according to Merriam-Wester online dictionary the definition of racism is “a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race”

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

7. **Scientism** – the idea that science is the only or the best source of knowledge.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) – The first problem with this is that the statement “science is the only source of knowledge” is not developed through the process of science, because it is a philosophical statement about knowledge. Science is a source of knowledge, but we also know that logic, mathematics, history, and psychology are also sources of knowledge. Even science leads us to understand there is something beyond what science can examine. Science and physical reality lead us to believe there is a Creator, Sustainer and even a Redeemer since science shows there is death in a world that otherwise has total balance.
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

8. **Socialism** (Communism) – a philosophy that effects political, social and economic order where property, production and distribution of goods are regulated by the government or some form of public ownership. The goal is equal distribution of goods and services in an equitable society.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

9. **Individualism** - emphasizes the moral worth, goals and desires of the individual concerning morals, politics, ideology and society. The individual is the focus and the interests of the individual are of primary importance in ethics, value, rights and duty.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

10. **Reductionism** – an explanation of complex life forms and scientific processes merely with terms from the laws of physics and chemistry. It oversimplifies complicated things such as the make-up of man which is both physical and soul. The interior of a physical body of a man can be examined totally, but the thoughts of the soul will never be discovered unless the man speaks. There are two layers here, but the reductionist would oversimplify man into a merely physical being and the physical nature of the man creates his thoughts, attitude and words.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –



- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

11. **Hedonism** – is based on the claim that the only two motivations in man are pleasure or pain. If this is followed as a life philosophy then ethically only pleasure has any worth or value.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

12. **Naturalism** – the philosophy that only natural laws operate in the universe. Natural laws are the only forces that determine behavior and govern the structure of the universe.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

13. **Same Sex Marriage** – the marriage of two people of the same sex or gender.

14. **Gender Identity** – is the individual's self-concept as a male or female. This is distinguished from actual biological sex (male or female).

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

15. **Moral Relativism** – is the view that morality or positions of right and wrong are cultural only being established if first there is a standpoint for determination. Morals may vary from culture to culture or from time period to time period. Each culture or time determines its own morals because there is no absolute, universal moral code. Different cultures and time periods must be tolerant of the wide variety of moral standards.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

16. **Abortion** – the intentional removal of an embryo or fetus.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

17. **Secular Humanism** – is a religious worldview that regard the universe as self-existing and not created. Man emerged as a result of a continuous process of evolution. The complete realization of human personality is the purpose of life so we should seek our own personal fulfillment right here right now. Any behavior accepted by law is okay.

- a. How is this rejected by Natural Revelation (Reality) –
- b. How is this rejected by Special Revelation, Scripture (Truth) –
- c. Alternative Answer -

These will be mainly worldly or social errors, but the list may cover Christian heretical errors by simply writing a basic statement of faith that covers basic doctrine and includes a salvation message.

## 15 – Logistics: The Combatants

In this battle between Truth and deception, the contest for Reality or deconstruction, there are four types of combatants. These four types of players in this strategic game for life or death are identified in Solomon's book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. Proverbs identifies these four types of people with examples and warnings, but also advice on how each of these combatants might be beneficial, corrected or avoided. The four combatants are:

1. Wise
2. Simple
3. Fool
4. Mocker

The **wise** are referred to at least 70 times in the book of Proverbs. They are described in Proverbs as:

- Increasing learning when they hear teaching (1:5; 9:9)
- Fearing the Lord instead of thinking to be "wise in your own eyes" (3:7; 26:12)
- Loving those who reprove them (9:8)
- Receiving commandments willingly (10:8)
- Listening to advice (12:15)
- Ignores an insult (12:16)
- Words bring healing and are not rash (12:18)
- Their teaching is a fountain of life (13:14)
- Those who walk with the wise become wise (13:20)
- The wise are cautious (14:16)
- Turns away from evil (14:16)
- Tongue commends knowledge (15:2)
- Spread knowledge (15:7)
- Appeases the anger of a king's wrath (16:14)
- Discerning (16:21)
- Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness (16:21)
- Makes speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips (16:23)

- Seek knowledge (18:15)
- Is full of strength and enhances his might (24:5)
- Turn away wrath (29:8)
- Quietly holds back his emotions (29:9)

Proverbs 3:35 – The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

Proverbs 29:9 – “If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.”

The **fool** as identified in the book of Proverbs:

- A babbling fool will come to ruin (10:8)
- Mouth brings ruin near (10:14)
- Utters slander (10:18)
- Doing wrong is a joke (10:23)
- His way is right in his own eyes, but takes no advice (12:15)
- His frustration is known at once (12:16)
- Flaunts his folly (13:16)
- Companion of fools suffers harm (13:20)
- The mouth of the fool brings a rod for his back (14:3)
- Has no words of knowledge to share (14:7)
- Reckless and careless (14:16)
- The folly of fools brings folly (14:24)
- Mouth pours out folly (15:2)
- Despises his father’s instruction (15:5)
- Sets his goals on distant, unattainable fantasies, instead of attainable knowledge (17:24)
- Only wise if he keeps silent (17:28)
- Finds no pleasure in understanding Truth and Reality (18:2)
- Finds pleasure in expressing his own opinion (18:2)
- Every fool will be quarreling (20:3)
- Devours his treasure (21:20)
- Despises the good sense of the wise (23:9)
- Will repeat his folly and mistakes (26:11)
- Trusts his own mind, but not wisdom (28:26)
- Rages, laughs and is not quiet while in an argument with the wise (29:9)
- Gives full vent to his emotions (29:11)

The **simple** as identified in the book of Proverbs:

- Simple are killed and destroyed for turning away from Wisdom, Truth, and Reality (1:32)
- Lacks sense (9:16)
- Believes everything (14:15)
- Inherits folly (14:18)
- Simple will learn when the scoffer/mockers is struck (19:25)
- Simple become wise when a scoffer/mockers is punished (21:11)
- Does not see danger and continue into suffering (22:3; 27:12)

Psalm 19:7 – “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”

Psalm 119:130 – “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”

The **mock**er (scoffer) as identified in the book of Proverbs:

- Abuses those who correct him (9:7)
- Hates those who correct him (9:8)
- Does not listen to rebuke (13:1)
- Seeks wisdom in vain (14:6)
- Does not like to be reproved (15:12)
- Will not be wise (15:12)
- Striking the scoffer will teach the simple man (19:25)
- Punishing a scoffer will make the simple wise (21:11)
- Arrogant, haughty acting with raging pride (21:24)
- Strife, quarreling and abuse will cease if you get rid of the scoffer (22:10)
- An abomination to mankind (24:9)
- Sets a city aflame (29:8)

“How long, O **simple** ones, will you love being naive?  
How long will **scoffers** delight in their mocking  
and **fools** hate knowledge?  
- Proverbs 1:22

The wise person is the goal. Wisdom holds the wise person up as an example to be followed, because the wise person fears the Lord, listens to teaching and accepts advice. They ignore insults and avoid the fools. They are recognized as constantly sharing life, spreading knowledge, and helping those who walk with them also become wise. The wise man appeases anger and speaks persuasively when they present Truth and Reality. The wise are full of strength. They are constantly enhancing their might because they do not trust their own worldly wisdom and continue to turn away from evil when it approaches.

The wise will be the victor in the end of this war even though they may face temporal setbacks and defeat in the skirmishes and battles of the world to which they are sent to testify Truth and Reality.

“And the wise among the people shall make many understand,  
though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.”  
-Daniel 11:33

“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;  
and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”  
-Daniel 12:3

The three other combatants are defined.

The **simple** is the person who does foolish things because they do not know any better. The simple lack knowledge. The simple can be corrected by being given correct information. Teach them and they change. They are simple because they do not know Truth. Because they do not know, they are easily led by the mocker/scoffer and influenced by the fool.

The **fool** is the person who knows what is right, but lacks self-discipline to do it. Teaching a fool does not help them since they already have information. They need someone to provide discipline for them to succeed with the knowledge they have. The fool does not have the moral discipline to do the good they know. Their soul is empty. The fool will follow leadership (good or bad) since they cannot provide it for themselves. Discipline will make a change. Providing strength in the soul of the fool will empower them to have self-discipline and overcome. Punishing the mocker/scoffer and removing the fool from their influence is primary. Then, fortifying the fool's soul with the transforming power of Truth and Reality will deliver the fool from their ways. But, in the end, it is still the fool that must make the choice. Are they going to embrace knowledge needed to fortify their soul, or will they continue with empty thoughts leaving them vulnerable to the winds and waves of the world?

The **mockers** cannot be corrected with instruction (like the simple) nor discipline (like the fool). A conflict with them can only be resolved by removing them. The mocker/scorner rejects and abuses those who correct him and will not listen to a rebuke. He hates those who love him. They are arrogant and haughty attacking Truth and Reality with their own pride. They are an abomination to mankind and set cities on fire with their strife, quarreling and abuse. (Pr. 29:8; 22:10) Fools will follow the mocker. (Pr. 9:7; 13:1; 19:25; 22:10; 29:8) The only way to avoid their influence of a mocker is to remove them. Instructional help is not an option because of their mindset.

The options are to drive out the mocker or self-destruct, because the mocker cannot be taught or corrected (Pr. 9:7-8). The mocker hates those who love them and those who try to help them they resent. (Pr. 9:8; 15:12). In a group situation the simple will follow the mocker and join their rebellious and divisive behavior. Punishing the mocker will teach the simple (Pr. 21:11). Driving the mocker out of the group will remove strife, quarrels and insults. The words "drive out" indicates the ending of a relationship by force (Gen. 3:24; 4:14; Ex. 23:29-30; Josh. 24:18; Ps. 78:55).

Certain organizations, groups or religious institutions do not need to be ended or reformed, but instead, they simply need to apply the principle of expulsion of the member who is the mocker. Remove the mocker to save the institution, church or social program. If the mocker is feared or respected within the organization the mocker will drive out the wise and that same institution will continue to decline further into corruption until it self-destructs or becomes insignificant.

These four combatants of Proverbs can be paired up with people in our society today.

- **Wise** are the **mature believers** who understand God's ways

- **Fools** are the **immature believers** who are saved by faith (delivered from death similar to the Exodus generation being delivered from Egypt), but they are ignorant of the ways of God because they do not have knowledge of God
- **Simple** are the **captive unbelievers** whose minds have been taken captive
- **Mockers** (scorner) are **rebellious unbelievers** whose hearts have hardened into evil against the knowledge of God

The Galatian believers of 48 AD are an example of foolish, immature believers. These believers had accepted the gospel but soon were led back to legalism. Paul calls them “foolish Galatians.” (3:1) Here the word for fool is not the Greek word *moros* which means “mentally deficient” and is where we get our word “moron”. The Galatians were not morons who did not know the truth. Being *moros* would be an example that aligns with the simple in Proverbs. In that case, they would need to be separated from the mocker and given correct information, the knowledge of God.

“O **foolish** (*a-noetos*, “no-mind) Galatians! Who has bewitched you?  
It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.”  
- Galatians 3:1

Instead of calling the believing Galatians *moros* Paul uses the word *anoetos* which uses the prefix “a-” to negate the meaning of the word to which it is attached. Here “a-” is attached to a word meaning “mind” (*noetos* a form of *nous* which means “mind”). The Galatians were “no-mind believers.” Paul is saying the Galatians had a mind with information, but they refused to use the discipline of logical thinking. Thus, they were “fools” as in *anoetos* and not “morons” as in *moros*. The Galatians were “fools”, or ignorant believers, who remained immature because they did not embrace the Word of God and advance in their understanding of the knowledge of God. Since they had not developed knowledge of God they had little or no faith. And, because they did not have faith in God’s Word they had to place their faith in something else. The Galatians had made the focus of their faith their own works and obedience to an empty religious code. Since the foolish, immature Galatians did not have the Truth of God in their souls the object of their faith became their own performance in a legalistic system that required observance of dietary laws, religious days and other carnal forms of holiness.

The wise or mature believer must recognize how to interact with each of these fellow combatants in this battle. The wise man will instruct many, help many understand and turn many to righteousness (Dan. 11:33; 12:3). To do this the mature believer must recognize that:

1. Immature believers (fools) need instruction and verse by verse teaching from the Word of God.
  - a. Jude 22 – “have mercy on those who doubt (**FOOL**)”
  - b. Colossian 2:8 – “See to it that no one takes you captive (**FOOL**) through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.
  - c. Romans 12:2 – “Do not be conformed to this world (**FOOL**), but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (**WISE**), that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
2. Captive Unbelievers (simple) held hostage by the world, the mockers and Satan. The simple must be set free from their captivity by having the empty philosophies in their soul dismantled

and replaced with Truth and Reality. They need to hear the Word of God and see the Light of God shine in the lives of believers.

- a. Jude 23 – “save others (**SIMPLE**) by snatching them out of the fire, to others (**SIMPLE**) show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”
  - b. 2 Timothy 2:24-3:1 – “The Lord’s servant (**WISE**) must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them (**SIMPLE**) repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come!”
  - c. Ephesians 2:1-3 – “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (**SIMPLE**). All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.”
  - d. Ephesians 2:12 – “Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”
3. Rebellious Unbelievers (Mockers/Scorners) who have been hardened by deceit should be warned and avoided.
- a. 2 Timothy 3:2-9 – “People (**MOCKERS**) will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not advance much further. For just like Jannes and Jambres, their folly will be plain to everyone.”
  - b. Romans 1:18, 20-23 – “...Men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (**MOCKERS**) So they are without excuse...For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”
  - c. Romans 1:32 – “Though they (**MOCKERS**) know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them (**SIMPLE** and **FOOL**).

“The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,  
but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.  
Toward the **scorners** he is scornful,  
but to the **humble** he gives favor.  
The **wise** will inherit honor,  
but **fools** get disgrace.”  
- Proverbs 3:33-34

## 16 – Running with the Horses

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:  
‘Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
You shall say to them,  
“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.’””  
- Jeremiah 11:1-4

It appears this occurred shortly after the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy), “the words of this covenant”, was found during the renovation of the temple in Josiah’s reign in 623 BC. (2 Chr. 34:8-13; 2 Kings 22:3-7)

Jeremiah began to call the people of Jerusalem to hear and obey the words of the covenant which would have been Moses’ words of 1405 BC spoken and sung to the second generation in the wilderness before they crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. These words were recorded in the book of Deuteronomy (“words of this covenant”), but they had been mistreated, replaced and misplaced by the priesthood in Judah by the time of King Josiah (640-609 BC). Soon after the discovery of this document in 622 BC during Josiah’s attempt at national reformation and his restoring of the Temple in Jerusalem these words were made public. They were read aloud to the people, and the priests were instructed to obey them:

“Then the king (Josiah) sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him.  
And the king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great.  
And he (Josiah) read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord.”  
- 2 Kings 23:1-2

“And the king commanded all the people,  
‘Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant’ . . .



Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord.”  
- 2 Kings 23:21, 24-25

Jeremiah joined with Josiah in an attempt to advance the knowledge of the words of the Book of the Covenant (or, what we would say, the Word of God in the book of Deuteronomy). But, according to the Lord’s word to Jeremiah some of the people of Jerusalem and Judah were not hearing or obeying these words. So, Jeremiah spoke for God to the people. Jeremiah was speaking in support of Josiah’s efforts to bring reform to the culture around 622 BC. (36 years before the city and temple were totally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC).

Jeremiah was one of the priests who lived with his family in the town of Anathoth which was a priestly town just 2 miles northeast of Jerusalem on the other side of the Kidron Valley. When Jeremiah began to support Josiah and proclaim his words of prophecy he was rejected by the priests and, even, by his family in Anathoth. The priests continued to oppose the written Word of God that had been given to them by Moses, but now, they began to reject the prophetic Word of God spoken by Jeremiah to call the nation back to the written Word of God. The priests in Anathoth who had been opposing the written revelation now began to oppose Jeremiah.

The priests of Anathoth and Jeremiah’s family in Anathoth were so embarrassed and disgraced by Jeremiah’s ministry of proclaiming the Word of God to the people and supporting Josiah’s attempt to reform that they demanded he stop. They threatened to kill him if he continued to bring disgrace on their family and their reputation.

“Thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, and say, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die by our hand.’ ”

-Jeremiah 11:21

The priesthood was a very lucrative “business” to be involved with. Even in Jesus’ day the priesthood was the wealthy, elite class and, of course, persecuted and oppressed those that did not cooperate with their stranglehold on the society, the temple and the profits made on the sacrificial system. (Remember Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers in the temple while quoting Jeremiah’s words from Jeremiah 7:11, “ ‘Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching!’ declares the Lord.”) Jeremiah was putting his life at risk breaking rank with the elite class of priests and with his own family’s priestly “business” in 622 BC. Even though the priests had lost and replaced the “words of the law of God” by 623 BC, they had not lost, renounced or replaced themselves as the overseers and beneficiaries of the sacrifices and offerings (food, drink, money, clothing and other possessions) brought to them by the people that the “words of the law of God” had prescribed. In other words, the priest had kept the benefits, but neglected the purpose. The priests were still getting paid, but were not doing the work. In fact, the priests had expanded their temple “business” by opening new locations at shrines and high places on many street corners of Jerusalem and in towns across Judah. (Jer. 11:13; 2 Chr. 28:24-25) The priestly “business” had been very, very good to Jeremiah’s priestly family, but now Jeremiah was

acting out of line with the priestly business policies. By condemning the cultic high places and calling the people back to the “words of the covenant” Jeremiah was not politically correct.

At first Jeremiah was blindsided by the priesthood’s rejection of his ministry. He went to the Lord with the complaint that the priests of Anathoth were plotting against him. In Jeremiah’s thinking it is unfair for the priesthood to come against him just because he is actually doing the work of the Lord and proclaiming the Word of the Lord. Jeremiah complains to God saying,

“I was like a gentle lamb lead to the slaughter.  
I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying,  
‘Let us cut him off from the land of the living,  
That his name be remembered no more.’  
But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind,  
Let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.”  
- Jeremiah 11:19-20

The Lord follows by declaring he will bring judgment upon the men and their sons of Anathoth (Jer. 11:22-23), but it will be in “the year of their punishment” (11:23) but not now, not right away. Jeremiah will have to continue his ministry while the opposition from the priesthood continues. Jeremiah’s cry for justice will have to wait until the Lord is ready to bring judgment to the false priests.

Jeremiah then follows this answer from the Lord with another complaint asking again for those opposing his ministry be eliminated. He begins by appealing to God’s righteousness which would surely understand Jeremiah’s place of oppression at the hands of the ungodly. Jeremiah asks the Lord why these wicked are still prospering at their corrupt priestly “business” while he suffers:

“Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you;  
yet I would plead my case before you.  
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?  
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?  
- Jeremiah 12:1

Jeremiah tells the Lord that these men who oppose him only serve God in their appearance, but they are actually far from the Lord. Jeremiah compares himself to these godless men and reminds the Lord that Jeremiah’s heart is toward the Lord. The Lord knows Jeremiah’s heart, because the Lord has tested him. According to Jeremiah’s logic, since there is such a stark difference between the evil oppressors and Jeremiah the Lord should simply “pull them out like sheep for the slaughter:

“you are near in their mouth and far from their heart.  
But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you.  
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,  
and set them apart for the day of slaughter.”  
- Jeremiah 12:2-3

The Lord’s reply is not as sympathetic as Jeremiah had hoped. The Lord’s response an accusation of Jeremiah’s failure to endure. The Lord challenges Jeremiah to step up his game. There were bigger

battles to be faced then these mere men who masqueraded as priests while making vain threats towards God's prophet. The Lord challenges Jeremiah:

“If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out,  
how can you compete with horses?  
If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?”

- Jeremiah 12:5

The Lord was pointing out Jeremiah's weak endurance and his shaky stability concerning the knowledge of God. The mere words of the wicked priests were driving Jeremiah's soul out of God's rest and causing Jeremiah to stumble into the captivity of their false reality. As a man of God, given the strength and rest of God, Jeremiah was failing to maintain that place of strength and rest in God. He was entering the competition as a mere man racing against other mere men. The Lord's intention for his prophet was that he be strong and confident in the power of the Lord. In this place of strength and rest Jeremiah would be expected to compete against horses, if needed. Elijah had. (1 Kings 18:45-46)

Also, Jeremiah was stumbling in a safe country merely because of some verbal threats. What would Jeremiah do when these threats became physical and involved public mocking, stocks, prison, deep pits and starvation? The Lord asked his prophet, “if you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan” where the land was dangerous, grown over with thick vegetation like a jungle and a home to lions? Once again, Jeremiah was stumbling from the little opposition he was facing in 622 BC, but he would have to continue to speak Reality and Truth to this generation for another 36 years as society continued to decline into deeper and deeper social oppression. And then, after four decades of his ministry being rejected, the Babylonians would finally burn the city and temple. The events Jeremiah was to face in the coming years would be nothing compared to a few threats from the priests and the want-to-be prophets that opposed him.

The Lord ends his rebuke with some inside information that Jeremiah had not fully identified. Apparently Jeremiah had figured out the priests of his hometown of Anathoth were against him, but what he didn't know was that he could not even trust his family living in Anathoth. The Lord tells Jeremiah that even if his relatives appear to publicly speak well of Jeremiah, they are not to be trusted, because members of Jeremiah's own family had betrayed him and were crying out against him:

Your relatives, members of your own family— even they have betrayed you;  
they have raised a loud cry against you.  
Do not trust them, though they speak well of you.”

- Jeremiah 12:6

This was not the only time the Lord would need to remind Jeremiah to return to Lord's peace, rest and strength. Jeremiah continued to proclaim the Word of the Lord to his generation trying to encourage friends, family, kings, priests, prophets and the public to trust the Lord and obey his Word. Jeremiah was successful to faithfully proclaim the Word of the Lord, because Jeremiah would

constantly return to the place of God's rest in his soul and maintain the fortress of the knowledge of God in his mind.

“Thus says the LORD:  
‘Stand by the roads, and look,  
and ask for the ancient paths,  
where the good way is; and walk in it,  
and find rest for your souls.”

But they said, “We will not walk in it.” ’ ’

-Jeremiah 6:16

## 17 – Enter the High Place

Habakkuk prophesied around 606 BC which was twenty years before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Twenty years after Habakkuk the nation was overthrown and the people of Judah were taken into captivity in Babylon.

Habakkuk describes the culture of Jerusalem in 606 BC as being filled with social injustice of the elite oppressing the middle class into poverty. This resulted in strife and contention which would be the middle class fighting back legally in a corrupt legal system that was bent to favor the ruling class. Obviously, in that setting any judicial decision was corrupt because as Habakkuk says, “law is paralyzed and justice ever goes forth.” This resulted in the elite (mockers) always oppressing the wise, fools and simple in the land for their own benefit. As Habakkuk says, “the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.”

“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?  
Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?  
Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.  
So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.”  
- Habakkuk 1:2-4

The Lord then explains to Habakkuk in chapter one and two that he is going to bring justice upon the evil in Judah by using the “biter and hasty” Babylonians who have been provided the best military armament, technology and technique available in 600 BC. They will bring a deeper level of social injustice and destruction than was currently occurring in Jerusalem in 606 BC. This Babylonian

culture that will overpower the wickedness of Judah are guilty men who worship their own strength are mockers who consider their victims as worthless as sand and treat them like nets of unnamed fish from the sea. They will do the work of the Lord as the history continues to move forward towards the ultimate kingdom of God on earth, the home of eternal righteousness.

Habakkuk is stunned by the Lord's plan and tries to deny it just as Peter, after having just identified Jesus as "the Messiah, the son of the living God, (Matt. 16:16), rejected the Lord's intention to "go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Peter's reaction to Jesus' revealed plan was:

"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying,  
'Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.' "  
- Matthew 16:22

Indeed Habakkuk has faith in the Lord and is able to articulate in words, life and prayer the truth of God that has been revealed to him. But, God's intention to crush the nation of Judah with the pagan Babylonians is beyond Habakkuk's understanding of God, his plan and his purpose. God's promised plan for Israel and God's plan of salvation are still in play, but yet in the future. Habakkuk is told by the Lord that his plans will still come to pass at the appointed time, but until then Habakkuk (and, the believers he is representing as a prophet) must "wait for it". Until then, Habakkuk must stand firm in the faith he understands, but trust God concerning the things that are too overwhelming to be grasped by mere humans, even the prophet who is being told the message. Habakkuk is reminded, "the righteous shall live by his faith."

"For still the vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.  
If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.

"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.  
-Habakkuk 2:3-4

The mature, wise righteous man will stand firm in the knowledge and understanding already secured in his soul, but will even extend that knowable faith to also trust the deep recesses of God's unrevealed mysteries of Truth. This is not a blind faith. It never should be! We are never told in the Bible to merely trust some fantasy or vain hope. That is a doctrinal error we could call presumption. This is faith in the person of God who has already been proven to be trustworthy concerning his revealed intentions and his past interventions. The Lord's character should have already been experienced in our relationship with him. Now, we can face the unknown and the incomprehensible things of life knowing the same Lord is there and will continue to be there. This is why Habakkuk can write at the end of his book that he will continue to trust the Lord even though all the surrounding evidence would convince the "fool" and the "simple" to renounce their presumed confidence in God:

"Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,

the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,  
**yet I will rejoice in the Lord;**  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.  
God, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the deer's;  
**he makes me tread on my high places.**  
- Habakkuk 3:17-19

Habakkuk's knowledge of God allows him to "tread on my high places", or literally, "He will make me walk on my high hills". The Hebrew word translated "tread" or "walk" is *darak* which also means "march". This is Habakkuk saying that he has in his soul a high, strong tower in his soul where he can remain at rest even when outside his soul he is facing a time of no harvest, no food, no economy, and no physical sign of hope or deliverance. Habakkuk's salvation is not in the harvest, his strength is not in the economy, his place of protection is not his provisions. And, it is a good thing Habakkuk has not placed the hope of his salvation, strength and protection in these things because they are all gone and are not coming back in Habakkuk's lifetime!

Habakkuk's joy is in God, because God is the source of his salvation. Habakkuk's Lord is the God of his strength. Because, Habakkuk's thoughts can understand these concepts and his mind can remain concentrated on them, then Habakkuk can enter God's rest to tread in the security of his soul that is fortified with Reality and Truth.

"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:

'In repentance and rest is your salvation,  
in quietness and trust is your strength!'

- but you would have none of it.

You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.'  
Therefore you will flee!

You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.'  
Therefore your pursuers will be swift!' "  
- Isaiah 30:15-16