

A DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

FOR

MILITARY VETERANS

AND

ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL

BY

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THE ARMY OF GOD

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

(II Timothy 2:3-4)

“They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.”

(Joel 2:7-8)

In the context of these two scriptures you will see that God indeed does have an “Army” and that we can be an integral part of it.

This booklet is designed to encourage and instruct individuals on how they can become part of God's Army. It will take you from the rudimentary phases of basic salvation and give you an understanding of not only what God expects from us, but of what we can expect from God. He is a great “Commander in Chief” and he has already won the victory for us. How could we even think of choosing anything better than this?

MILITARY VETERAN EMPHASIS

I have chosen to write this booklet with “military veterans” as my emphasis. My reasons are diverse. First, I am a product of the military service. I have experienced the daily routine of “Boot Camp” or “Basic Training”. I have also experienced the trauma of combat duty in Viet Nam. These situations, combined with the events that took place following my military service, have been heavy on my heart for years. I am glad that I am finally projecting onto paper what is in my head and heart. My hope is, in some small way, this booklet may help you face your every day trials with new or renewed hope.

I want to emphasize very strongly at the beginning of this booklet that when and where you served in the military is not a major factor. All of us experienced some sort of trauma during our enlistment. It is true that some combatants suffer in differing ways than individuals who did not see front line combat, but I do not want to create a separation, or gap, between these two people groups.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Let me begin by telling you a little about myself. I feel this will help you identify with where I am coming from. The trail that has led me to writing this booklet has been a long and winding one. I want you to know that I am STILL on this trail and that I'll follow it until my death. You can join me by following the simple steps that will follow. Please give them a chance!

I grew up in a small Oregon town during the 50's and 60's. Being the "True Blue American Boy", I didn't consume any artificial substances until I reached college age. I was Most Valuable Back on our football team and excelled in other sports.

In the mid-60's I was offered a partial football scholarship to any "minor college" in the state of Oregon, but I chose to defer it and attend Oregon State University. It didn't take long for me to find out that I couldn't make the grade. Soon "Uncle Sam" was knocking at my door with a draft notice.

My decision to join the Navy for four years was solely based on the idea that it would keep me out of the Viet Nam War. While attending "Radioman 'A' School" after Boot Camp, I volunteered for "River Boats" in Viet Nam. From the day I got my orders I had about nine months to ponder my future before stepping on Vietnamese soil.

My one year tour started out a bit slow, but it heated up real quickly when our new river boats arrived from the U.S. The purpose of my unit was to ferry infantry troops around the small river and canals of the Mekong Delta in the IV Corps Region of South Viet Nam. We endured serious combat with many killed and wounded. I thought I was "lucky" to have made it out without a scratch. This was not to be true. I had been severely wounded mentally, emotionally and spiritually. On top of this I had become a hardened alcoholic by the time I was 20 years old.

From the rivers of Viet Nam I headed to Guam for nineteen more months of naval service. I repeatedly got into trouble. My evaluations from my leaders were very low. I became openly rebellious and defied my superiors. In early 1971 I finally was released with an "honorable discharge". This was a miracle.

The next few years that followed became an alcoholic blur. I couldn't maintain normal relationships due to my anger and rage. I had come out of high school with a common American ideology. I wanted to become a teacher and coach, marry, have children, and live happily ever after. My life was so broken after Viet Nam that I would not marry until I was 38 years of age.

In 1976 I quit alcohol but replaced it with street drugs. In early 1980 I had an experience that changed my entire life. Let me share it with you briefly.

Any time that anyone would approach me about God I ran them off immediately. I had my own belief and didn't want their "God" anywhere near me. Evolution was foolishness to me as well. I just felt that I would die, rot in the grave and the worms would eat me.

One day a high school buddy came to stay with me. He had recently had an experience with God and kept pressing me about it. I endured him until he finally left. A few days went by and what he had said about God kept nagging at me. I had quit drugs for forty days but had started up again. It was a very low point in my life.

While anguishing over my situation one day I was thinking about this "God" that my friend had told me about. I was very bitter, angry and yelled, "God, if you are real, then you make yourself real to me!" Nothing happened. I felt sort of satisfied because it confirmed there was no God.

Four days later I was sitting at my dining room table and out of nowhere a voice spoke. He said, "Flush your drugs down the toilet!" I was shocked and sat there a moment. Then I retorted with, "What about Randy, he uses them too?" The voice came back with, "He doesn't need them either, flush them down the toilet."

Out of obedience I got up, gathered all of my drugs and flushed them down the toilet. It has been over 23 years now and I have never used drugs since that day. Isn't that amazing? It was nothing short of a miracle.

The voice came within me in a way that I had never heard anyone speak before. I now know that it was God speaking to MY spirit, by HIS Holy Spirit. I emphasize "MY" and "HIS" and will elaborate upon this later.

I want to ask you to hang in here with me on this ok? You may be wanting to bail out, but this could be God trying to get your attention just like He did mine years ago.

WHERE AM I HEADED?

Isn't it interesting how man has a continual quest to seek after God? There are so many religions today. Where do we begin? I believe the rudimentary common denominator we are all searching for is the "truth". Especially

veterans. There is a reality, but too many confusing matters block our vision of it.

Most people who have served in the military are strengthened in many ways, but there can also be a loss of “trust” involved. Losing trust created a big problem in my life. I not only began to question my government, but I also began to question the intents of my peers. This led to isolation and problems with relationships.

Thorough studies have led to solid evidence which verifies the existence of “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD). PTSD can affect anyone's life. My focus will be upon individuals who are presently in the military or have served in the military ranks.

Let me begin by listing a few symptoms of PTSD: Anger, Rage, Depression, Isolation, Guilt, Anxiety, Emotional Constriction, Isolation, Intrusive Thoughts and Flashbacks, Emotional Numbing, Suicidal Tendencies, Substance Abuse and Denial. Sound familiar? If so, then you may be affected by PTSD in some fashion. I remember the first day I read these symptoms. I could say “yes” to almost all of them.

WHO IS GOD AND HOW CAN I KNOW HIM?

My only childhood understanding of God came from playing a “shepherd” in our Christmas play in grade school. This had no real impact upon me. No one in my immediate family were open Christians so I wasn't influenced one way or another. After my military service I was bitter and wouldn't let anyone approach me concerning God.

Many veterans have slightly different stories to tell. Some were nominal Christians and wandered off of the path while in the service. Others had faith, but it seemed to be snatched away by their military experience. Then there were those who had a strong enough foundation to withstand the temptations that came during their time in the service.

I believe the desire to know God stems from an inner drive to know the truth. This is difficult when our trust has been wounded. It seems that we must be brought low before we cry out to God for help. Unfortunately, some never do. It's not so much a matter of us reaching out to Him, but Him continually reaching out to us. He desires a relationship with us, but often times we are hardened by our past.

Shortly after He made Himself “real” to me I began keeping a diary. Today when I look back at the writings I am amazed at how many times I mentioned

that I wanted the “truth”. My inner man was searching for pure reality. Even after He spoke within me I was skeptical. This can be good if handled properly. As soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines we were taught to be on guard at all times. The same is true when seeking God.

When we buy a new appliance it comes with an instruction manual. How many times do we get into trouble before we turn to the manual? We think that we can manage it by ourselves without the manual. This is often true with the rest of our life. If we have no parameters, then we have no direction. As children, We need a role model. I found that Jesus Christ was my pattern to follow.

JESUS CHRIST - “THE WORD”

I can remember reading the holy scriptures for the first time. My goal was to find flaws so I could eventually prove them wrong. Guess what happened? The more I tried to prove them wrong the more right they became! As I studied daily, God began to make Himself more real to me. I remember struggling with the “Trinity” and other facets of the Bible. What I really needed to begin to grasp was who “Jesus Christ” really is.

Let me share a few pertinent scriptures with you to help you see Who Jesus is and what He should mean to us.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

(John 3:16)

Many of us have heard this scripture at one time or another. Perhaps we haven't. What it is saying is that God the Father GAVE His only Son, Jesus Christ, to come and be our Savior. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit of God and the virgin Mary. We will see later that we can be “born again” in similar fashion.

Note that it says “God so loved the world”. As a mother cares for her children, so God cares for us. He has created us and He desires that we fellowship with Him. This is an awesome thought. He cared enough for me that He met my cry for help. He WILL meet your cry as well.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

(John 1:1)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

(John 1:14)

Who is this “Word”? It's rather obvious that Jesus Christ is being spoken of here. He was in the beginning with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

(Philippians 2:5-8)

This makes it rather clear. His “death” upon the “cross” was for you and I. While we were yet dead in our sins, Jesus Christ died for us. He not only died, but was buried for 3 days and then resurrected from the grave, overcoming sin and death. As a good Soldier, He was disciplined and obedient to the Father even unto the death. For this we should be eternally grateful!

Listen to what Jesus told the disciples before He died:

“If ye love me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

(John 14:15-18)

When we begin to understand Jesus' sacrifice for us, then we can relate to Him sending the “Comforter”, or “Holy Spirit”, to dwell within us. You might be asking, “Who is the Holy Spirit and what can He do for me?”

Here's Who He is:

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me (Jesus): for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

(John 16:13-14)

The Holy Spirit's job, if you will, is to come and abide with us to prepare our "house" or "temple" for the Father and Son. He will show us "all truth" if we so desire to know it.

So we see that Jesus Christ IS the "Word". Word insinuates the written letter. Jesus fulfilled the written law, as well as overcoming death and sin, so He is the physical and spiritual manifestation of the written word that we know of as the "Holy Scriptures".

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

If we see the purity of Jesus Christ and the function of the Holy Spirit, then we'll begin to see that it is very possible that the scriptures were written by mere men, but inspired by God Himself. Therefore, if we truly seek after Him, utilizing the scriptures as His "instruction manual" for us, then we can begin to have freedom by faith in Jesus Christ.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

(John 8:31-32)

When I was but a "babe in Christ" I had a yearning for the "truth". I wanted to regain the trust that I had lost during my military service. Here we see that Jesus is the way to that ultimate truth that will "make you free". I have experienced this freedom and this is why I am writing specifically to you so that you might have that freedom as well.

I know that you are suffering as I was, but you know what it's going to take? A move by you that is contrary to anything that you were ever taught in the military. Surrender! We were never taught to surrender right?

Look what Jesus is asking us to do:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

(Revelations 3:20)

Yes, Jesus is standing right there at the door to your heart. All you have to do is surrender to Him as your Lord and Savior and He will send you the Comforter to assist you with the remainder of your life.

HOW CAN I KNOW HIM?

Man can make it awfully difficult for us to get to know God. Many say that you have to jump through this hoop or that hoop in order to even approach Him. This is false. Remember how I simply asked Him to make Himself real to me? I had no knowledge of how to go about knowing Him. He made it awfully simple for me didn't He?

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

(Roman 10:9)

How simple it is! You see, man makes it difficult. Jesus says that His “burden is light” and that His “yoke is easy”. We are the ones who make it difficult.

Perhaps at this point you would like to take a moment to ask Him into your heart. You know that He's been waiting at the door for many years. Just say these simple words out loud:

“Father, today I realize that I am a sinner and am in need. I can see now that You sent Your only Son, Jesus, to die upon the cross for me. I believe that You raised Him from the dead, victorious. Jesus, You have shown me that You will send me Your Holy Spirit to comfort me and dwell within me forever. I believe this and ask your forgiveness. Amen!”

If you have taken this step of faith, I congratulate you! If you don't feel as though you can do so right now then that's ok. Your heart needs to be desirous in order to make the choice.

“SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY”

Let me take a moment now to put things into better perspective from man's position. We have talked about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Who make up the Holy Trinity. Now let's look at what makes up man.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole SPIRIT and SOUL and BODY be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

To save you confusion, the “second coming” of Jesus Christ is being spoken of here. Look how the Apostle Paul brings out the Spirit, Soul and Body of man here. We are made up of a three parts according to the scriptures. Without God, our Soul and Body are usually in control. We cater to the whims of our earthly desires without understanding heavenly things. That’s why we have so much trouble with the lusts of our mind and body. It’s why we cannot control our emotions and desires.

Our spirit is usually “dead” without God in our lives. This is not always true though. Our spirit can be alive to the “evil” things of the world. These are diverse.

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

(Ephesians 2:2-3)

Doesn't this make it clear? Without God we are subject to the “spirit” that causes “disobedience”. Notice in this condition we follow after the desires of our “flesh” and “mind”. This is the same as the “body” and “soul”.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”

(Ephesians 2:4-6)

Look at the transformation that takes place in these five scripture verses! Even when we were dead in our “sins”, without Jesus Christ, God had great mercy and love for us and sent His Son to redeem us from hell.

I'm submitting to you that the quickening that is being spoken of here is God's Holy Spirit coming to cause our dead spirit to become alive. Think of the Holy Spirit as a conduit to God Himself. Jesus was raised from the dead and sits at

the right hand of the Father in heaven. Now He's offering the same position to us in Christ Jesus!

BEING "BORN AGAIN"

When you open the door of your heart to Jesus and allow Him to come in and "sup" with you, then you are "born again" of the Spirit of God at that moment. Too simple you say? No! Man has made it seem difficult.

Nicodemus, a great religious leader during the time Jesus walked upon the earth, approached Jesus in secret one night. He was searching for answers as you are. Look at the conversation they had.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be BORN AGAIN."

(John 3:3-7)

I mentioned earlier that we can be born of the Holy Spirit and of a woman just like Jesus was. This is what Jesus is trying to say to Nicodemus here. We are first born of the "flesh" and then we are born of the "Spirit" as the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

(1 Peter 1:23)

Here again we see the Apostle Peter reiterating the same theme. Notice that the "incorruptible seed" is "by the Word of God" which is Jesus Christ.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

(Galatians 3:16)

We can see clearly here how the "seed" is not plural, but singular. There is only ONE Savior and that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT JESUS' DEATH DID FOR US

Even though we may be a brand new “babe” in Christ, He views us as a finished product. Try to imagine how a potter must visualize, from a lump of clay, a finished product. This is how God views us. He sees the beginning and the end. Let's see how He views us:

“Neither is there SALVATION in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

(Acts 4:12)

“SALVATION” comes through NO ONE else but Jesus Christ!

“Therefore being JUSTIFIED by faith (belief in Jesus Christ), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

(Romans 5:1)

Here we see that we are “JUSTIFIED” by simple faith in Jesus which brings us into a divine peace with God.

“Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

(Romans 5:9)

How do we become “JUSTIFIED”? Only by belief in the shed “blood” of an innocent man named Jesus.

“In whom we have REDEMPTION through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

(Ephesians 1:7)

Now we see that “REDEMPTION” also comes through His shed blood. This is turn frees us from our sins from His viewpoint. This does not mean that we do not have to work out our salvation on a daily basis though.

“And such were some of you: but ye are WASHED, but ye are SANCTIFIED, but ye are JUSTIFIED in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

(1 Corinthians 6:11)

Here we see that we are “WASHED”, “SANCTIFIED”, and “JUSTIFIED” in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh how important His sacrifice is for us!

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us WISDOM, and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION:”

(1 Corinthians 1:30)

Can it be any clearer than this? The “WISDOM” AND “RIGHTEOUSNESS” of Jesus Christ are added to the gifts given to us. All we need to do is to choose to follow Him as our Commander-in-Chief and we will receive all of this.

“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be SANCTIFIED through the truth.”

(John 17:19)

Jesus, by being obedient to the Father’s will unto death, sanctified Himself that we might be “SANCTIFIED” through the truth that we spoke of earlier. Now He asks us to simply follow after Him in order to share in His wonderful inheritance.

Look what else Jesus says to us:

“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”

(Matthew 16:24-27)

If we do so then look what the reward will be:

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

(John 8:31-32)

Do you want to be free in Him? This will require a choice and commitment on your part. Again, I stress that you will have to do something contrary to your military training. You will have to “surrender” instead of resist by giving only your “name, rank and serial number”. Surrender is not easy for someone who has spent a lifetime trying to remain in control of his or her life. Surrender means that you will have to begin submitting things to Jesus Christ that you have held dear to your heart for years. This may be alcohol, drugs, sex, anger, pride, etc. It is natural for the “outward” things to be given over

first because all of our peers can see them. It's the "inward" things that are more difficult.

Let's look a moment at how God views us. We need to try to see a glimpse from His perspective in order to see where we stand in His sight. Keep in mind when reading this how our military traumas may have caused us to flee into the shadows. How we have remained isolated for so many years due to PTSD.

Look how awesome He is:

"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

(Psalms 139:1-17)

Again:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out

of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

(Isaiah 55:8-11)

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is the key that we hold to a life in eternity with Jesus. We can remain hardened within and distance ourselves from God, or we can submit and be refreshed by His wonderful Holy Spirit.

Awareness of a need for repentance first comes by an association with guilt. Once the guilt is recognized for what it is, then freedom can come from the grace of God and a transformation will take place. We must exercise our mind to choose to reverse a decision that has been made in our past. This reconsideration of our ways can lead to eternal life in that specific area of our lives!

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

(Romans 6:3-14)

We can see several things in these scriptures. First, that we are "baptized" into Jesus' death. This means that HE has conquered everything for us and our position is to rest in His complete sacrifice for us.

What does this require of us? Paul goes on to say that we must reckon ourselves "crucified" with Him. Why? So that the "body of sin" can be

destroyed. This also comes by simple faith in His total victory for us. As we begin to walk in this faith, we choose not to sin. As we choose not to sin, which is REPENTANCE, then He grants us the grace to overcome. God sees the finished work. Our duty then is to work out our salvation each day. As the Holy Spirit reveals our iniquities then we are able to stand in the victory won by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The analogy that Paul uses of the “old man” and “new man” is excellent. We must see that our old man is nailed to the cross with Jesus and that he is hanging up there with Christ. There is a problem here though. We can beckon the old man down from the cross at any time. This will happen from time to time. We start out as “babes” and as we mature, then we are able to leave the old man on the cross with Jesus where he should be.

As we continue to yield ourselves to Him, then we will gain more victory and He will clothe us with His righteousness. This comes through simple discipline and obedience.

REGENERATION

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

(Romans 12:1-2)

We see in these scriptures that our “reasonable service” to God is to present ourselves to Him on a daily basis. By doing so we will begin to know His will for our lives and not be “conformed to this world”.

Now look at what happens. There is a “transformation” and a “renewing of the mind” that takes place. What a wonderful hope for us who have lived in despair with no answers for our future! Let's look at this some more.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

(Titus 3:5)

Earlier we discussed the subject of being “born again”. We saw how simple it was. All we need to do is believe that Jesus is Lord and the Holy Spirit of God will come to dwell within us “forever”. Now we see the very Holy Spirit of God is the One who beckons us into the process of regeneration.

“That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

(Ephesians 5:26-27)

The “washing” and “cleansing” come by our intake of the Word of God. If we do not read the earthly instruction manuals then often times we run into serious trouble. The same goes with our growth in Him. If we do not read our Bibles and fellowship with others then we cannot grow. A profound danger is we are always subject to “false teachers”. If we don’t check out what man teaches us in relation to God’s inspired Word, then we will find ourselves walking down the wrong trail.

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

(2 Corinthians 4:16)

Here’s an example of an “inward” and “outward” man. If we choose not to grow by His Word, then we will perish. We must continue to nurture our inward man on a daily basis in order to be fresh and current in our walk with Jesus.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the Corner, And a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

(1 Peter 2:7-10)

Look what we can become if we continue marching along with Him! A “chosen generation”, selected by God Himself. A “royal priesthood” to rule and reign over His Kingdom. A “holy nation” fit together according to His will in order to function as one in Jesus Christ. We are certainly a “peculiar people” chosen by God to do His bidding. Being chosen out from among the multitudes is an excellent feeling. It is for ALL of us, but so few heed the call. This can ONLY come by His out flowing of mercy towards us.

WHERE DO WE FIT INTO HIS ARMY?

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

As former soldiers many of us have lived in generations wrought by war. Globally it surrounds us every day. We begin our walk by being “babes” in Christ. This can be related to Basic Training or Boot Camp. We enter our training ignorant of the things of God. As we begin to be fed and apply ourselves then we advance in knowledge. If we strive to excel then we will graduate on to “Advanced Infantry Train” (AIT) if you will. A good soldier should continue to seek knowledge so he may survive and help others when times get tough. It is no different as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We see that obedience and discipline are the keys. It is so very important to realize that this battle is against “imaginings” and all things that seek to exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. We must realize that, in our past without God, we have allowed forces to enter our perimeter. Now God is asking us to put off that influence and put on Jesus Christ. We must surrender, which is contrary to what we are taught in man’s army.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

(Ephesians 6:11-18)

Here we see very clearly that our battle is not against flesh and blood. The Word defines our enemy. It is not expected, at this point, to understand fully what is meant by this. We can, however, see what our daily armor should be. Try going down this list every day and put on the armor of God. You will be

surprised how effective it is. We who have put on man's armor should be quick to realize how important God's armor is.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

(2 Timothy 2:3)

This is a very simple statement put forth by the Apostle Paul to Brother Timothy. It is a sentence that we should ALL stand on daily.

"They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executeth His word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

(Joel 2:7-11)

Look at what we can by in God's Army! Can you imagine marching and never breaking ranks? We shall even fall on the sword and not be hurt. This is the kind of Army that I want to be in.

HOW DO WE FIT IN AND WHAT ARE OUR REWARDS?

Rewards are a delicate subject in relation to God. We seem to always have a tendency to think that He has done it all for us, so how could we ever expect to be rewarded. Let's look into this a little farther.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

(1 Corinthians 3:11-16)

These scriptures are VERY clear when it comes to rewards. If we “build” with the things of God, then there is no doubt that we will be rewarded accordingly. If we “build” with those things that are not of Him, then we will suffer loss.

The following are a partial list of the rewards offered by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Take a look at them and BELIEVE that you can fit into this category if you press on in Him. As faith is not seen, these rewards will be awaiting us upon the resurrection. Just look at what is in store for us!

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that OVERCOMETH will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

(Revelations 2:7)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that OVERCOMETH shall not be hurt of the second death.”

(Revelations 2:11)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that OVERCOMETH will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

(Revelations 2:17)

“And he that OVERCOMETH, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the Morning Star.”

(Revelations 2:26-28)

“He that OVERCOMETH, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

(Revelations 3:5)

“Him that OVERCOMETH will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.”

(Revelations 3:12)

“To him that OVERCOMETH will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.”

(Revelations 3:21)

“He that OVERCOMETH shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.”

(Revelations 21:7)

WHAT IS OUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

In the beginning the Godhead had fellowship with Adam and Eve. After this man and woman sinned they lost this fellowship. I believe that the ultimate goal, or the desire of the Godhead, is to come back into this communion with us. We were created for a purpose. That purpose is to be with the Godhead for eternity.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

(John 14:2)

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with Him.”

(John 14:23)

Too often we look towards the heavens, not understanding what He means by “mansions”. To get a better picture take a look at the word “abode” in verse 23. This is exactly the same word as mansion. Then where is the mansion? It appears that it is IN US as the Godhead comes to dwell with us in fellowship.

We see this in a greater extent by looking at what the scripture tells us about the “temple” of God.

“Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: What house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?”

(Acts 7:48-49)

This scripture states very clearly that God DOES NOT dwell in a temple “made with hands”. Then where does He dwell?

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

(Hebrews 8:10-13)

He puts His “laws” into our minds and will “write” them in our hearts. Then look at what He says. He will be to us “a God” and we will be to Him “a people”.

In the Old Testament God came to meet the people in the “tabernacle” that was built by the people in the wilderness. Then He met them in some of the temples they built. These “were made with hands”. So this was not the true tabernacle. Let's look at the true one.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

(Revelations 21:3)

This scripture makes our purpose more clear. The “tabernacle of God” comes to be with men. What happens then? The Godhead comes to “dwell with” us and God Himself “shall be with” us! This is the true fellowship and communion that God Himself desires from us. Isn't this awesome?

“And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

(Genesis 1:31a)

Our Lord God did not create us in vain. He makes this clear from the beginning. Even though man has fallen, He is ever merciful to hold His outstretched arms to us to draw us back to Him.

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(1 Corinthians 1:9)

He indeed is “faithful”. All we must do is submit ourselves to Him and commit to serve Him through obedience and discipline. Then, and only then, will we begin to understand His indescribable love for us.

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

(Revelation 22:1-5)

This is an analogy of what is to come. The “pure river of water of life” represents the eternal existence that the Father is offering us through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. As you read these scriptures reflect back upon the rewards that He promises us. Look at how He describes us (i.e. a Royal Priesthood, peculiar people, etc.). Doesn't it all fit? Throughout the scriptures we are told that we cannot look upon His face. Now He's telling us that we can! This is the ultimate fellowship and communion that He desires of us.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

I leave you with this scripture. It wraps up all that we have talked about. Ponder these things and don't let man sway you one way or another. Be a “good soldier” in Jesus Christ. Seek after the True and Living God and one day you shall see His face.

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