

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

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The Way

In the church's early days, those who were Christ's disciples were said to belong to **The Way**. It was not until later that the disciples were called Christians.

Acts 9:1-2

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

Acts 19:9

But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of **The Way** before the

multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples...

I like the fact that Christianity was referred to as **The Way**, for it reveals some things about following Christ that are often overlooked when one thinks of Christianity as one of a number of world religions.

First, it is **THE** Way. There are not many ways to God. There is only one.

John 14:6

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

Second, a way is not a destination, it is a path. It infers a process. We cannot confess Christ as Sav-

ior and then sit and wait to be taken to heaven. Being born of the Spirit of Christ is simply the gate by which we enter. There is then a path we must walk.

Matthew 7:14

"For the gate is small, and **The Way** is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

Many want to stop and rest after having entered the gate. If they do not walk **The Way**, they will surely fall short of arriving at the will of God for their life.

Are you waiting to be taken to heaven, or are you following **The Way** that leads to life?

Food for Thought

"I would rather walk with God in the dark than go alone in the light."

Mary Gardiner Brainard

"Live as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the grave today, and is coming back tomorrow."

Theodore Epp

Scripture Memory

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.1.5
- *Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ*
- Chapters 12-14

Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ

Chapter 12 – Christ, Our Counselor

It is normal when struggling with some addictive desire to want someone to give you a specific set of ordered steps that you can follow in order to attain victory. What we have seen thus far in this book are some foundational things that must be attended to in order to have any hope of overcoming addiction. There are also things a person should be doing every day in order to build up the spirit man. But overcoming is not found in a series of ordered steps. It is found as we walk in the Spirit.

The church has a tendency to package things into a nice neat packet of rules to follow, or principles to adhere unto. I listened to a preacher named

‘Do the next thing the Spirit tells you to do.’

Dudley Hall share a revelation on this matter. He said that he had a conversation with a friend who had told him that he had finally found a list of ordered

rules that truly worked. When asked what they were, Dudley’s friend replied, “The first rule is ‘Do the next thing the Spirit tells you to do.’” He then stated, “The second rule is ‘Then do the next thing the Spirit tells you to do.’” He concluded that all the steps were the same.

I thought this was wonderful advice, and it is in keeping with the counsel of the word of God.

Romans 8:14

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

It is not Yahweh’s desire that His children should be led by a book full of rules and regulations. Living in such a way tends to lead men to distance themselves from the presence of God. When we look to a body of legal code to tell us what to do in every instance, then we neglect to seek the

face of God. Our Father desires that we should be in communion with Him daily. He wants us to ask Him for understanding, and to seek Him for direction. As we do so, we are kept in communication with Him.

Consider the following analogy. Suppose your earthly father gave you a book when you were young, and he had written down instructions to guide you in everything you were to experience throughout your life. When some situation arose in which you were unsure of your father’s will, you would get out the book and find some instruction that would guide you in that particular situation. The result of operating in such a way is that you would spend far less time in the presence of your father. This is not a result that Yahweh desires. Practically, such a book would be impossible to write. Even the Bible does not contain specific instructions regarding the Lord’s will in all situations.

For example, consider a young man that is considering marriage. There are Scriptures that lay out some general principles on marriage. A Christian is only to marry another Christian is one such instruction. But the Bible does not tell you what specific person you should marry, or even if you should marry at all. Perhaps you are struggling with knowing whether you should marry Susie, or if it would be better to marry Sally. The Bible will not tell you, and God has designed it this way for a purpose. He wants us to speak directly with Him. He doesn’t want His children to walk apart from His presence.

The Believer’s life is to be one of abiding in Christ. We must always stay connected to the source of divine life. We dare not walk away from His presence. The Spirit of Christ dwelling in us is capable of the most intimate and specific instructions.

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I Corinthians 2:11-13

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

If you are a Christian, you have received the Spirit of Christ to instruct you and lead you in all things. This even includes the specific instructions regarding how you are to overcome your addictive desires. Do not make the mistake of thinking that because the Lord led one person to do a particular thing, that He will lead everyone in the same manner. He will not. There may be general principles that we must all follow, but the specifics of our battle to overcome addiction will be tailored to us as individuals.

We can see the truth of this as we once more look at the history of the Israelites as they went in to take possession of the land and drive out all the enemies. Yahweh gave the people specific instructions for each battle. Each city they conquered was fought in a different way.

The first city that Yahweh led the people to conquer was Jericho. Under the leadership of Joshua they were shown precisely what to do, and it was a most unusual battle plan. Yahweh instructed all the people to march around the city of Jericho once a day for six days. As they marched they were to remain silent. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times, and after the seventh time around the priests were instructed to blow the trumpets and all the people were to shout. Yahweh promised them that as they did so the walls would fall down.

Now, you or I would never in our wildest imagination have come up with such a peculiar plan of battle. Our knowledge of how battles are conventionally fought would have most likely shaped our idea of how Jericho should be conquered. We might have thought of laying siege to the city, or constructing some type of towers, or using battering rams on the gates. I do not think any of us would have come up with the idea to simply march around it as Yahweh instructed them to do. But Yahweh's plan worked. When the people shouted the walls of Jericho fell down and the people of the city were undefended. Israel then went in and easily conquered the city.

There is absolutely nothing written in Scripture that is without a purpose. We should anticipate that there are great lessons for us in the detailed description of Israel's conquest of Jericho. Yahweh wants us to understand that the battles in our lives are not to be fought according to the wisdom of the world. We are always to get our battle plan from Him. He will direct us with great precision, and as we do exactly as He says, He will insure that we come forth victorious.

After the conquest of Jericho, the Lord instructed the Israelites to go up against the city of Ai. If the Israelites had done as many Christians do today, they would have concluded that what worked at Jericho would surely work at Ai as well. But had they marched around the walls, and then shouted on the seventh day, all that would have resulted would have been a spectacle. The people inside the walls would have laughed at all the blowing and hollering going on, for nothing would have happened.

If you are a Christian, you have received the Spirit of Christ to instruct you and lead you in all things.

Yahweh had a different plan of attack for Ai. Joshua, however, failed to immediately consult

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Yahweh to know His mind. We read that Joshua sent some men to spy out Ai, and they brought back a report. It was a smaller city, so Joshua chose to only send a few thousand men to attack it. The Israelites, though more numerous, were routed and thirty-six of them were slain in the battle. Joshua then did what he should have done at the beginning. He fell on his face and prayed to Yahweh. He waited to hear from God, and God spoke to him.

Yahweh informed Joshua that the Israelites had sinned by taking some of the spoil of Jericho and hiding it. They had been commanded to take no

The tendency to judge things by appearances is deeply ingrained in our flesh.

spoil from Jericho, for all was to be dedicated to Yahweh as a firstfruit offering in the land. Because they had sinned, they could not face their enemies. They had to

deal with the sin first. If Joshua had inquired of Yahweh before sending men to battle, Yahweh would have surely spoken to him and thirty-six lives could have been spared.

After seeking Yahweh's face, and removing the sin from their midst, Yahweh gave them the plan of battle to conquer Ai.

Joshua 8:1-8

Now Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it." So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. He commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city,

but all of you be ready. Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as at the first, we will flee before them. They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for Yahweh your God will deliver it into your hand. Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of Yahweh. See, I have commanded you."

We see once again that Yahweh had a very specific plan of attack for the Israelites to follow when seeking to overcome the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. It was His will that they should ALWAYS seek Him to know how the battle was to be fought. The tendency to judge things by appearances is deeply ingrained in our flesh. This was the cause for Israel's first failure. They went and looked things over, and decided that they would attack according to the way that seemed most reasonable. We are not to judge things by appearance, nor make decisions according to our natural reason. We are called to be a people of the Spirit. "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

We see how deeply ingrained this tendency was in the hearts of the Israelites in an event that occurred next. Dwelling right in the middle of the land of Canaan was a group of people called the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites had heard how Israel had destroyed Jericho and Ai, as well as all that God did in bringing them out of Egypt. They trembled in fear at the approach of Joshua and his people. Knowing they could not defeat Israel in battle, they thought to defeat them through deception.

The Gibeonites appointed key men to go and ask Joshua to make a treaty of peace with them. They knew Joshua would not do so if he discov-

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ered that they dwelt in the midst of the land God had promised to Israel, so they made it appear as if they came from a far land. They put on worn out clothes. They put moldy cheese and dry bread in their bags. They chose worn and patched water flasks to carry. Through these means they sought to deceive Israel into thinking they came from a far land.

These men came to Joshua and the leaders of Israel and told them that they had come from a land far away from Canaan where the fame of Israel had been heard, and they asked for a treaty of peace with them. The leaders of Israel questioned them concerning where they had come from, and asked if they dwelt in the land of Canaan. The Gibeonites denied doing so, and they showed them their food and clothes and water bags as proof that they had journeyed a long way.

Once more the leaders of Israel neglected to consult with Yahweh. The Gibeonites appeared to be telling the truth. Consequently, Joshua made a treaty of peace with them. A few days later their deception was uncovered, but it was too late. A treaty had already been made and the oath had to be honored. Israel was not able to dispossess this people due to the treaty. This enemy dwelt in their land throughout all their days when God desired for them to be conquered.

In the book of Isaiah there is a prophecy of Christ that declares that He would not do as the Israelites did. He would not judge things by appearances.

Isaiah 11:3-4

And He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge...

How do we make decisions if we are not judging by appearances? We do so by pressing into the presence of God and seeking His counsel. This is how Yahshua discerned what He was to do in every instance. We see this same diversity in the actions of Christ as we observe in Yahweh's battle instructions for Israel. Christ healed a number of blind men during His ministry. Following are a few examples.

How do we make decisions if we are not judging by appearances?

Matthew 20:30-34

And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Yahshua was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David..." Moved with compassion, Yahshua touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

Mark 8:22-25

And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Yahshua and implored Him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

Mark 10:46-52

Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Yahshua the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Yahshua, Son of David, have mercy on me..." And Yahshua stopped and said,

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"Call him here." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Yahshua. And answering him, Yahshua said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" And Yahshua said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.

We observe in each instance that Christ healed the blind in a different fashion. He touched one man's eyes. He spit on another. To the third He

We should not assume that Christ will lead us to victory over the sin in our flesh by the same method He used on another.

simply spoke a word and he regained his sight. We should not assume that Christ will lead us to victory over the sin in our flesh by the same method He

used on another. Even if a dozen men all have the same addiction, Yahweh will not necessarily deal with each one the same. In order to know how God would have you to overcome your addictive desire, you need to receive His counsel. Whatever He tells you, do it. As you do, you will be assured of the victory.

As Christians, we have a tendency to gravitate towards formulas in our dealings with people and their problems. The reason for this is that it is easier for those who are not comfortable walking in the Spirit. When we follow formulas, rules and policies we are never left guessing what to say to a person, or what advice to give them. We already have things packaged and our response becomes automatic. Those who walk according to the Spirit must maintain their communication with God. This mandates that they have no sin in their life of which they have not repented. Sinful men and women can run programs. But only the righteous can walk by the Spirit.

Recently, a brother and I had a discussion con-

cerning what our response should be to people who come up to us in the city asking for money. This is a very frequent occurrence where I live. Many of those who ask for money say it is needed to buy food, or gas, but it ends up at the liquor store or in the pockets of the drug dealer. Knowing this to be a frequent occurrence, many Christians simply decline to give people money when they ask. Others give money without question, believing it is their responsibility to give to the one who asks, and it is up to the recipient what they do with it.

As I thought on this matter, and prayed asking the Lord for wisdom, I was anticipating that He might lead me to some Scripture that would provide a means of determining what my response should be in each instance. Instead, the Spirit declared that He did not want me to rely on a formula, but that He wanted me to trust Him to give me direction at each moment as I was faced with these requests. He revealed that some times He would have me to meet the request without question. Other times He would direct me to purchase the item the person said they needed. Still other times He would instruct me to withhold what was asked for, or to respond in an altogether different manner.

I realized that my soul would have preferred that God simply provide some Scriptural formula upon which I could judge these requests. His ways are higher than ours, however. He much prefers that we abide in Him, and that we learn the sensitivity of spiritual listening. As we develop our spiritual senses we will find in the end that it is a much simpler way to walk, and we will always discern that which Yahweh desires when we are attuned to the voice of the Spirit.

Some people who read this book will find themselves involved in some form of ministry to those who struggle with addiction. Your own church may have a ministry, or a program, to reach out to such ones. You may ask, "Is it wrong to have a

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program, and to have a specified course of instruction and activity that we lead the people through?" I do not believe it is wrong to have a program, but we must keep in mind that no program will ever serve as a substitute for being led of the Spirit.

It should be an emphasis of every ministry to the addicted that those ministering are Spirit led and Spirit empowered in all they do. The ministers must be men and women who are full of the Spirit. We see this pattern in the book of Acts when the apostles were seeking to appoint men to oversee the ministry of caring for widows.

Acts 6:3

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."

If the ministers meet these qualifications, then there is no need to concern oneself about how they are carrying forth their duties. Neither is there a need to hand them a book of policies. What will come forth will be a living and breathing ministry, full of the life of the Spirit of Christ. Programs and policies can actually discourage those involved from being Spirit led. Things may be so regimented and inflexible that there is no room for the Spirit to move.

It seems a much more precarious position to take, to allow individuals to hear from God and make decisions, rather than instructing them in all they are to do. Doing so involves risk, but life is risky. God is always leading us into situations where we are cast upon Him to provide for us and deliver us. Being Spirit led will actually promote fast spiritual growth among those involved in ministry. They will quickly have to learn a sensitivity to the Spirit. They will have to rapidly attain discernment and learn to exercise sound

judgment.

It is perhaps helpful to note that in the Bible we never read of God anointing a program, or ministry. His anointing is always upon people and ministers. This is observed in the following verses.

I Kings 19:15-16

Yahweh said to [Elijah], "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

When Yahweh wants some work done, He anoints people. The Spirit is the anointing, and the Spirit is life. Life must be poured into that which it can animate.

Programs cannot be animated, but people can. There is no such thing as an anointed ministry. There are only anointed ministers. If you have the best designed program that can be devised, and it is not carried out by Spirit led and empowered people, then it will not produce life.

When Yahweh wants some work done, He anoints people.

Any ministry to those struggling with addiction, must of necessity teach those seeking help to hear God's voice for themselves. Their victory will come as they hear and obey. This instruction in discerning the voice of Christ must be a key part of any ministry to addicts. How can they be instructed to discern the voice of Christ if the ministers are not discerning His voice themselves?

We see then, both by the history of Israel, and

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the example of Christ, that Yahweh would have us to be a Spirit directed people. He wants us ever abiding in Him. The more dependent we are upon Him for all things, the more we will see Him manifesting His power through our lives.

As you seek to know what specific steps to take in order to overcome your addiction, you must look to God. He will give you specific instructions.

Some He will tell to relocate that they might get

Yahweh would have us to be a Spirit directed people.

away from evil influences. Others He will tell to remain where they are at. Some He will tell to change occupations. Some He will instruct to take actions

that would make no sense to another, but which are necessary in their own life. The Spirit may instruct you to attend a church that you had not been attending, or to quit attending a church you had been. Whatever our battle plan is in overcoming addiction, we must receive it from the Spirit of Christ.

Chapter 13 – His Part and Ours

In order to have our minds fully prepared to do battle against addictive desires and the sin that dwells in our flesh, we must understand clearly what God will do for us, and what He expects us to do. I have heard numerous people who were struggling with various sins declare, “I have asked God to take this away from me time after time, and it has not gone away.” I have heard this confession in reference to the desire to drink, or to do drugs, and even from those who are struggling with anger.

I wrestled with the question of what God would do for me, and what He expected me to do, for many years. As a young man struggling with sexual lust and an attraction to pornography I

sought diligently to understand this matter. I sought the counsel of pastors and church elders, but never received the answer I needed. I looked for books on the topic, and I even found one that had the same title as this chapter, but I was disappointed when I read the book and found that it was not written to answer the specific questions I had.

My upbringing in church had left me confused concerning the matter of what God’s role was in my overcoming sin, and what my own part was. I had heard ministers declare that we must be like Paul who prayed that God might remove his thorn in the flesh. I have found that this is the mindset of many struggling with addiction. Their response before God is to simply ask Him to take the evil desire out of them. When they have prayed this many times, and the desire has not gone away, they are often left confused and doubting. This was my own experience while wrestling to overcome a desire for pornography.

Adding to my confusion was the testimony of many men and women who declared that when they became Christians that some sin they had been enslaved to all their lives was suddenly gone. I have heard reputable accounts of men who cursed like a sailor all their lives, but when they were born again of the Spirit the desire to curse left them, and it was never again a problem. I have heard of men who were marvelously delivered from alcohol or drugs or cigarettes in the same way, and I believe these accounts to be true. I could not understand why God would not do the same in my life, as I had asked Him many times to take away the impure sexual desires.

It wasn’t until later years when the Spirit began to open my eyes to see the parables in Scripture that I understood the truth of this matter and received the long sought after answer. The answer to my question was right before me in the account of the Israelites going in to take possession of the land of Canaan. As we have seen, the

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land of Canaan is a type and shadow of man's flesh. It is in man that Christ seeks to establish His kingdom. The enemies we face are those sinful desires and passions that reside within our flesh.

As the Spirit began to open up to me the parable of Israel's battles, I saw an amazing thing. There were times when God drove some enemy out of the land without Israel having to lift a finger against them. Following is one such account.

Joshua 24:12

"Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow."

Without the Israelites having to enter into battle at all, God defeated these two enemies in the land of Canaan. Yahweh completely drove them out by sending hornets into their midst. This story finds its parallel in the lives of those men and women who have been marvelously delivered from some besetting sin without them ever having to fight a battle against it.

The Spirit revealed to me through Israel's history that although He may choose to drive out some of the enemies in the land of our flesh in this way, He will never drive out all the enemies in this fashion. He will always leave some enemies in the land that we might learn spiritual warfare. Yahweh left some enemies in the land that Joshua's generation did not drive out fully. He did so that future generations might also learn warfare.

Judges 3:1-4

Now these are the nations which Yahweh left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel

might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly)... They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of Yahweh, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses.

This is clearly a spiritual parable for the Christian today. Yahweh wants all His children to experience spiritual warfare. In this way we will not only grow strong and skillful in the weapons of our warfare, but Yahweh will prove those whose hearts are fully given to Him. If we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength then we will not rest until all the enemies have been routed. If we do not love God it will be revealed in our lack of vigor in seeking to rule over the flesh. Yahshua said, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." He has commanded us to rule over the flesh.

If we do not love God it will be revealed in our lack of vigor in seeking to rule over the flesh.

As you seek to overcome the desires in your flesh you must understand that God would not have you to pray that He would take the desire away. If He has not freely removed an enemy in our flesh, then He would have us to do battle against it. To ask God to take away the struggle would be similar to an Israelite facing an enemy and saying "God, I don't want to fight this enemy. Please make them go away!" God will not do such a thing. He wants you and I to learn spiritual warfare.

There are many Scriptures in the New Testament that pick up this analogy of the Christian overcoming sin being like a soldier engaged in a battle. Our weapons are not physical, like a sword and a spear and a shield. The Christian has been given spiritual weapons.

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II Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...

We are not fighting against a physical enemy. We are waging war against passions and desires and thoughts. Our weapons are those that will enable us to destroy every thought that rises up against the obedience of Christ.

We are waging war against passions and desires and thoughts.

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit...

We will look at the weapons of our warfare in

more detail in a later chapter. For now we want to make the point that God will not deliver you from addiction without you having to practice warfare. It is vain for a Believer to constantly ask God to remove the desire, or evil passion from their flesh. He wants you to cast it down. He wants you to destroy it, and He has given you everything necessary to face this enemy and prevail.

Satan will seek to tempt us to sin, and he will suggest thoughts to us that are contrary to the will of God. There have been times when some impure thought would enter my mind and I would cast it down only to have it appear again. At times this warfare would last for hours. In this way Satan seeks to probe for weakness. He wants to see if our commitment to obeying God has limits. God also wants to reveal the same thing, so He allows Satan to attack us. We must remember that God has promised to always set a limit to the trial that we might be able to overcome, but we will be pressed severely at times. The Scriptures declare:

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

This is a promise. If we resist the devil he will flee. However, there is no word here that indicates how long we must resist before he will flee. I have learned that Satan hates to be defeated. When he has determined that we are not going to give in to his attacks, he will cease attacking us in a particular area. If he has any doubt, and he believes he might win, he will continue to press us relentlessly. The best thing we can do is to determine to never give the enemy any hope of victory. When he sees our commitment to obey God, he will tire of attacking us.

In college I took a psychology course and we

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studied operant conditioning. Tests were done on rats to study their behavior. It was discovered that if a rat pushed a button and received food from it, they would always come back to that button and push it again. If they pushed a button and never received a food pellet, then they would give up and never go back to pushing that button. However, if there was a button that gave pellets randomly, sometimes providing a pellet, but other times not providing a pellet, the rat would keep pushing the button until he received what he desired. Even if he had to push the button 99 times before receiving a pellet, he would persist because he knew that it would eventually release that which he sought.

Satan operates much the same way in our lives. If he has any hope that in persisting to push our buttons that he will entice us to abandon our obedience to Christ and give into temptation, he will keep on doing so. When he sees there is no longer any hope of producing the desired result of sin, he will give up. Satan's role is therefore beneficial to the Christian. By his attacks he serves to reveal if there is some area of our life where we are not fully committed to obedience.

God wants to prove our love for Him. He could have driven all the enemies out of the land of our flesh when we first came to Him. His goal, however, is not merely to have a land devoid of enemies, it is to have mature sons and daughters who love Him and are fully committed to Him. For this reason He requires that you and I engage in the battle. In this way we are made strong spiritually, and our love for God is proven.

Chapter 14 – The Necessary Fear of God

I urge you to pay special attention to this chapter, even if the topic seems unappealing to you. Some having read previous chapters that spoke of my long struggle with an addiction to pornog-

raphy may ask how I finally broke free of it. As you read this chapter, you will understand, and you may find these truths to be equally liberating for you.

The topic of the fear of God has fallen out of vogue in this late hour at the end of the age. Many churches have sought to fashion God into an image that is more appealing to sinful men and women. They therefore focus upon the kindness, love and mercy of God while ignoring His equally important traits of justice, righteousness and holiness. It is never wise to neglect any aspect of truth, particularly as it relates to the character and actions of Yahweh in His dealings with mankind.

Fear has come to take on a very negative connotation, and in most cases this view is right. The fear of man, or of Satan, or of circumstances and events brings bondage and torment. Yet there is one type of fear that brings freedom. Though fear is decried in many places in the Bible, this particular fear is never reproved, but it is praised instead. This is the fear of God.

It is never wise to neglect any aspect of truth...

The apostle Paul had a complete view of God in mind when he wrote the following words:

Romans 11:22

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, reveal that God is kind, but He will not allow His children to walk in rebellion and stubbornness

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without judging them. In writing to the Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul warns them to not think lightly of God's kindness, forbearance and patience, so as to take advantage of it in an unrighteous way.

Romans 2:4-11

Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

God is never satisfied for men and women to make a mere confession of Him in their lives. He

Whenever we read the words "Do not be deceived," we can be assured that many saints are walking in deception.

wants more than the honor of our lips, He demands the obedience of our lives. The Scripture above states that He will be impartial in His judgment. It mat-

ters not that you are one of His children, you will be judged according to your actions.

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Whenever we read the words "Do not be deceived," we can be assured that many saints are walking in deception in the matter being addressed. God wants us to know the truth, He has set parables throughout the creation to help us understand truth. One such parable is seen in agriculture in the process of sowing and reaping. The principle revealed in the natural realm is that you always reap what you have sown. If you have sown corn seed into the ground, you will reap from the ground corn. If you came back at the end of the season expecting potatoes you would be deceived. If you want to reap potatoes, you better be planting potatoes.

This seems so basic as to be almost comical. We might wonder what type of person would be so foolish as to expect to reap an altogether different type of crop from which he or she planted. We would laugh at them if they told us they planted tomatoes, but were really hoping at the end of the season that there would be watermelon in their place.

How then is it that myriads of Christians are living careless lives where they are engaged in sinful and selfish pursuits, and they are expecting to enter into the joy of the Lord when they die? How is it that so many can be walking in sin while they are expecting to receive the reward of the righteous? If they answer, "It is because I am prayed up, and I always ask forgiveness for my sin," and by this alone they are expecting to reap eternal life, they are deceived. Such unreasonable expectations are exactly what the apostle is seeking to refute when he says, "Do not be deceived...."

I Corinthians 6:9-10

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,

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nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

And again we are told:

Ephesians 5:3-7

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them...

James 1:22

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

God's word testifies over and over that He will judge us according to our actions, not our confession. The apostle John also sounds forth this same message.

I John 3:7-8

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

Who will God judge to be righteous? Those who walk in righteousness! Those whose words and actions are in accordance with the will of God! The many Biblical warnings against deception occur most frequently in regard to this one pervasive lie. Men and women falsely believe that their confession alone is all that is needed to be

accounted as righteous in God's sight. Yet God says such a mindset seeks to mock His justice.

Consider the example of two men who live in the same town who both pursue the same fleshly passions and desires. Man number one goes to church and the other doesn't. Man number one prayed a sinner's prayer and the other has not. Man number one asks God to forgive him every time he sins, and the other doesn't. Yet they both live the same lifestyle. They both regularly view pornography, or get drunk, or take illegal drugs. Both live carnal lives as they seek to fulfill the desires of their flesh. It would be a mockery of God's justice for the first man who claimed to be a Christian to ask God to judge him differently than the other man. Yet many Christians have such an expectation.

This type of mentality is so prevalent among Christians today that some who read this might be saying, "Hey, I don't believe you are right. Isn't the man who confessed his sins justified before God and considered righteous?" It is just such a message of confession that has become separated from actions that has led to so much deception in the church today. Consider the following parable of Christ, which seeks to make this matter as plain and easily understandable as possible.

God's word testifies over and over that He will judge us according to our actions, not our confession.

Luke 6:46-49

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who

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has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

This principle is as true for those who are now in the age of the church as it was for those who were under the age of the Law. The basic principle of sowing and reaping has never changed.

When we have no fear that continuing in disobedience will bring severe consequences, we are much more apt to be careless ...

Consider the words of Christ to the seven churches in Asia whom He addressed in the book of Revelation. Christ was speaking to Christian churches. He

was sending a message to those who called Him "Lord." He was speaking to those who claimed salvation through His blood. Yet over and over He began His addresses to these churches by declaring, "I know your deeds." (Revelation 2:2, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, 3:15) It was by their deeds that He accounted them either righteous or unrighteous. It was due to their deeds that He either pronounced judgment or reward. Christ did not begin each address by saying, "I know your confession." God demands that our belief be proven by acts of obedience.

You may ask why I am speaking about this in a book that is about overcoming addiction. The reason is that when we have no fear that continuing in disobedience will bring severe consequences, we are much more apt to be careless in our resolve to overcome the sin in our life. The scriptures provide the following insight:

II Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Holiness is perfected in the fear of God. If we have been deceived into thinking that we can continue in sin after having become partakers of the grace and forgiveness of God then we will be prone to continue sinning. Yet the Scriptures are very clear that this is not God's will, and those who do such things will incur judgment.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Hebrews 10:26-31

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

These words should cause us to tremble if we are not walking as overcomers after having come to the knowledge of Christ's atonement and having become partakers of His Holy Spirit. The Christian who continues in sin will be judged more severely than the person who has never come to Christ. The reason is that those who are given more abundant grace have more expected from them. In the Gospel of Luke we find another parable given by Christ.

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Luke 12:47-48

“And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

Those who have known the great gift of salvation through the precious blood of the Son of God shed on their behalf, and who have become partakers of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, have much expected of them. God has given them all things necessary to lead a godly life. For them to trample on the blood as if it is a common thing by continuing carelessly in sin is an abomination in the sight of God. To treat the gift of the Holy Spirit with contempt, when He would make known to them the path of righteousness and provide all power for a holy life is equally contemptuous.

When it is understood that God will not allow such flagrant disregard for His will to go unpunished, men and women are incited to put aside sin and pursue the will of God for their life. In my time with a rescue mission I have met numerous men who confess to be Christians, yet who are still enslaved to their evil desires, and they have shown great carelessness in their attitudes. It is evident that they do not fear God. Some of these men have spoken to me of having had prophetic words spoken over them concerning a specific call of God on their lives, yet they are doing nothing to ready themselves for usefulness. The apostle Paul told Timothy the following:

II Timothy 2:19-22

"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house

there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

I believe that the prophetic words spoken over some of these men were truly from God. Yahweh has a high calling that He would bring them into. Yet if they do not cleanse themselves from wickedness they will be disqualified and their position and reward given to another. Many have already suffered such a judgment. For this reason, even among the children of God, there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on the day of judgment. Those who could have had so much will see how foolish they were as they squandered the high calling of God and wasted the precious opportunities Yahweh afforded them.

I know from experience the great value of coming to understand the fear of God.

I know from experience the great value of coming to understand the fear of God. After struggling with pornography for many years it was the fear of God that served as a key to bring me victory. I knew I had a high call upon my life. It had been prophesied, and the Spirit had made it known to me for many years. I had begun to enter into some small measure of service to God, but I was still dabbling with pornography. One day the Spirit spoke to me and said, “If you do not rule over what your eyes look upon then you will be disqualified from that which I have planned for you.”

I cannot tell you the anguish that gripped me as I considered what it meant to forfeit the good

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things God had ordained for my life. I was gripped with a great desire to not disqualify myself, and it was due to this fear of God that I was able from that moment forward to put away pornography and never pick it up again. I have been tested many times since that date. Even while at the mission there have been numerous times when I came across some pornographic magazine hidden away by one of the men in residence. Many times I was in a secluded place with no observers around when I discovered it. Yet every time I was immediately mindful of God's warning, and I would not even open the cover of the magazine, but I would take it to a trash can and immediately throw it out.

Even the greatest among Yahweh's servants can benefit from the fear of God in their life.

Even the greatest among Yahweh's servants can benefit from the fear of God in their life. Consider the words of the apostle Paul after he had been serving as an apostle for many years.

I Corinthians 9:27

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

The apostle Paul understood that he could act in such a way as to become disqualified from the apostolic calling on his life. It was this fear of disqualification that led him to discipline his body and rule over it.

There have been numerous instances in my life where the fear of God has been a great boon in motivating me to press on to victory over some stronghold in my flesh. One such instance was related to a stronghold of covetousness that had been present through all my adult life. In disobedience to the will of God I went into debt in order

to purchase things that I longed for. Time after time God corrected me in this, but I would return to the same error.

Since my youth I have loved the word of God, and I have yearned to understand the mysteries of His word. I have often prayed for spiritual understanding, and I have found the study of God's word to be the joy of my life. One day when I was well into adulthood, and was still walking in covetousness and disobedience, having incurred more debt, the Spirit spoke to me through the following Scripture.

Luke 16:10-11

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

The Spirit spoke very plainly to me. He proclaimed to me that if I could not be faithful in the usage of money, which is an unrighteous thing, then God would not be able to entrust to me the true riches that flow from His hand. I understood these true riches to be the knowledge and understanding of the Kingdom of God and the mysteries of His person. I intensely desired to receive these very precious things from God. I understood that if I did not begin to walk faithfully in what was to God a little thing, the stewardship of money, then I could not receive the greater things.

With this word from the Spirit of Christ I was finally able to press on to victory over this stronghold in my life. It has been many years now since I have had any debt at all, and I am careful to seek the will of God in all my spending. I have learned the contentment of having little of the world's goods, and I have been blessed to re-

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ceive that which is immensely more valuable, the knowledge of God.

If you would have victory over addictive desires that have long plagued you, then you must feed the spirit, and you must embrace the truth concerning Yahweh's justice and holiness. The wisdom of Solomon declared the following:

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom...

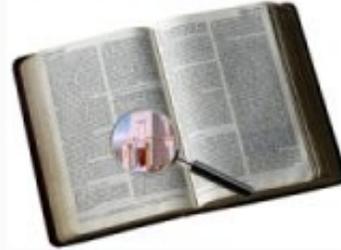
The fear of God is in no way contrary to His merciful nature. If we are walking in obedience to Him then we have no reason to fear anything. He desires that we should always walk in the comfort of His love. Yet as a loving Father, He knows it is not love to allow us to continue in behavior that is destructive and will lead to immeasurable loss. Therefore He balances His comfort with His fear. They walk hand in hand.

Acts 9:31

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

Yahweh always seeks the welfare of His children. Even His judgments are beneficial, for He knows the stubbornness and rebellion that is bound up in the heart of man. If He must chastise us severely, He will do so for the sake of love. Let us not foolishly resist His grace, nor trample on His kindness and mercy. A day of great sorrow and immense regret will attend all who do, for God will not be mocked. We will reap precisely what we have sown.

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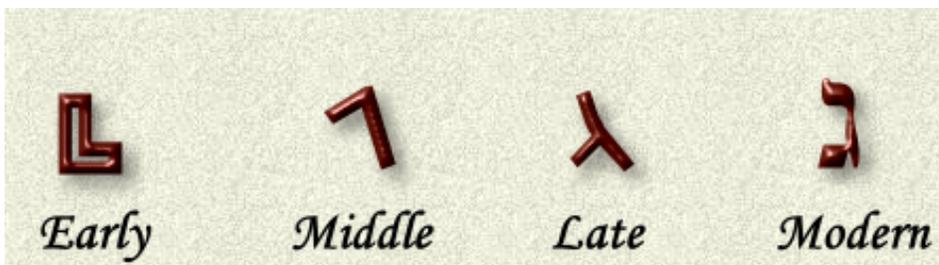
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PARABLES PRECEPT—The Hebrew Alphabet



(Image source: Ancient Hebrew Resource Center's Website)

The Hebrew letter pictured above is Gimel. In the early Paleo-Hebrew it represented a foot. One Hebrew word that is written with this letter is Golgotha. You may be familiar with this word, as it was the place that Christ was crucified.

John 19:17

They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is

called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

A fascinating thing is observed when we see the word Golgotha written in Paleo-Hebrew. It appears as follows:

†𐤀𐤋𐤁𐤀

Reading right to left, this is the letters Gimel, Lamed, Gimel, Lamed, Tav. We might write this as GLGLT, from which you can see its resemblance to Golgotha.

We see here an image of two feet, and two shepherd's staffs, and a cross. Christ was the Lamb of God

who was slain for the sins of the world. Christ walked on His two feet as He carried His cross to Golgotha to be crucified. We see the cross after the image of the two feet and the two shepherd's staffs.

A shepherd's staff was also used to rescue a sheep when it had fallen into a pit or a ravine. The shepherd would catch the sheep up with the crook of the staff and raise him up.

Christ said of His crucifixion:

John 12:32

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

It was at Golgotha that Christ was crucified, and His sacrifice there is what draws all men to Him, even as a shepherd uses his staff to rescue a lost sheep.