

HELL AND  
THE  
AFTERLIFE

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International Ministries

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*Published by:*

*Crossroads Publications  
10681 Princes Highway  
Warrnambool  
Victoria 3280  
Australia*

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# HELL AND THE AFTERLIFE

To gain a deeper understanding of the wonderful gift of salvation, and the great mercy and love of our God, we need to have some comprehension of what we have been delivered from. A general explanation of “the underworld of departed spirits” gives insight into that which awaits those who have rebelled against God and not accepted the gift which He freely offers, that of salvation through the death of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

## THE UNDERWORLD OF DEPARTED SPIRITS

**The world of departed spirits** was known in the Old Testament by the Hebrew word “Sheol.” The equivalent word for this place in the New Testament is the Greek word “Hades.” These words are both loosely translated in the Bible by the general term “hell.” Using the story of Lazarus and the rich man as a reference point (which we believe to be not a hypothetical story but a real account), we can see that the underworld actually contains two sections, an upper section and a lower section. Thus, the rich man in torment in Hades “*looked up and saw Abraham far away*” (Luke 16:23). So we can understand that Hades consists of an upper section (Abraham’s Bosom, also called Paradise or Upper Sheol) and a lower section (Lower Hades or Lower Sheol). The upper section is a place of peace and comfort, and the lower section is a place of torment. However when the term “hell” (Hades) is used in the New Testament, it always refers to the lower part, the place of torment.

**There are five different parts** of the underworld (spirit world) of departed spirits:

1. Lower Hades
2. Abraham’s Bosom (Upper Hades)
3. Tartarus
4. the Bottomless Pit (Abyss)
5. the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).

1. **Hell**: this word is a general translation of Upper and Lower Sheol, Upper and Lower Hades, Gehenna and Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4). However its usage is properly limited to mean Lower Sheol or Lower

Hades, a place of torment where, after physical death, the spirits of all mankind who have rebelled against God are imprisoned. When hell is mentioned at any time in the studies, this is what the word is referring to.

Luke 16:22-31 gives a clear description of what Lower Hades, this place of torment, is like:

***LUKE 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom (Upper Hades or Upper Sheol): the rich man also died, and was buried;***

***LUKE 16:23 And in hell (Lower Hades or Lower Sheol) he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.***

***LUKE 16:24 And he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame (the fires of hell are literal)."***

From these scriptures we can see that the rich man in hell still had his memory, emotions and senses, and therefore he could feel his torment as a real experience, of which there would be no end.

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***“ . . . The rich man in hell still had his memory, emotions and senses, and therefore he could feel his torment as a real experience, of which there would be no end. . . ”***

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2. **Abraham's Bosom**: also known as “Paradise,” “Upper Hades” or “Upper Sheol,” was not a place of torment, but rather a place of comfort. The word translated “Paradise” in the Bible has derived its origin from a Persian word meaning “an enclosure” or “a park surrounded by a wall.” It also means “an eden” or “a place of future happiness.”

So the word paradise can mean:

1. Abraham's Bosom (Luke 23:43), or
2. Heaven itself (2 Corinthians 12:4).

The place which Jesus called "*Abraham's Bosom*" was inhabited by the Saints under the Old Covenant who were held there after physical death. In this place, eternal death was kept at bay until Jesus came to lead all those who were in this prison of happiness (which God could not enter), into a place of eternal joy (called heaven), into the presence of God. Obviously, this place is now no longer needed.

***LUKE 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;***

***LUKE 16:23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.***

***LUKE 16:25* But Abraham said, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things (doesn't mean this was the reason he was lost), and likewise Lazarus evil things (his situation didn't cause him to reject God): but now he is comforted (in Abraham's Bosom), and you are tormented (in Lower Hades)."**

**Note:** "The rich man didn't allow his blessings to bring him to the Lord, and Lazarus didn't allow his poverty to keep him from the Lord" (E.S.B.)

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***'...The place which Jesus called "Abraham's Bosom" was inhabited by the Saints under the Old Covenant who were held there after physical death. . .'***

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3. **Tartarus:** is a place of punishment for some of the fallen angels who defied the natural order by entering into sexual sin with women (Jude 1:6-7), and so were punished severely. They are imprisoned in this place, awaiting the final judgement of the Great White Throne.

**GENESIS 6:4** *There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God (angels) came in unto the daughters of men (women), and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.*

**JUDE 1:6** *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation (transgressed the limits of the original position in which they were created), He (God) has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the Great Day (the Great White Throne Judgement).*

**2 PETER 2:4 . . .** *God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement;*

4. **The Bottomless Pit:** also known as the “Abyss,” is reserved for Satan. This is where he, bound, will be cast for one thousand years after Christ’s Second Coming. No human will ever go to this place, for it is the abode of certain fallen angels and demons (Revelation 9:1-3; 20:1-3). Revelation 9:2 speaks of the Bottomless Pit:

**REVELATION 9:2** *And he opened the Bottomless Pit (the Abyss); and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*

5. **The Lake of Fire:** also known in Greek as “Gehenna,” is a separate place from the previous four, and is the final abode for all demons, fallen angels (including Satan) and every person who has

rebelled against God. Even Hades itself will eventually be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The Lake of Fire was originally prepared for the devil and his angels, as Matthew 25:41 tells us:

***MATTHEW 25:41*** *Then shall He (Jesus - God the Word) say also unto them on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”*

The Lake of Fire is a place of everlasting punishment, and is also known as “*the second death.*”

***REVELATION 20:10*** *And the devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (this marks the end of Satan's influence).*

***REVELATION 20:14*** *And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death (eternal separation from God).*

***REVELATION 20:15*** *And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life (the record of all the redeemed from Adam to the Great White Throne Judgement) was cast into the Lake of Fire.*

***REVELATION 21:8*** *. . . the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

***REVELATION 20:10*** *. . . and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (a never-ending torment).*



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***“ . . . The Lake of Fire is the final abode for all demons, fallen angels (including Satan) and every person who has rebelled against God and is known as the second death. . . ”***

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Four of these parts of the underworld are places of torment, having two things in common:

1. **They contain a spiritual fire** (Matthew 13:42; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:24).
2. **They contain spiritual darkness** (Matthew 22:13; Jude 1:6).

What a person will experience forever in hell and the Lake of Fire will be:

1. **Consciousness** - knowledge of who and where they are (Luke 16:23-28).
2. **Memory** of having rejected the only way out (Luke 16:27-31).
3. **Pain** and torment (Revelation 20:10; Luke 16:24).
4. **A thirst** that cannot be quenched (Luke 16:24).
5. **Sorrow** and weeping (Matthew 22:13).
6. **Hopelessness** - knowledge that there is no escape (Luke 16:23-28).

## **DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT AND TYPES OF DEATH**

**There will be varying degrees of punishment** in the Lake of Fire, according to their deeds, for all those who have rebelled against God.

***REVELATION 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.***

**Jesus spoke of this principle** in Mark 12:38-40 concerning certain Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and lived hypocritical lives. These people would be punished most severely.

Also in Matthew 11:20-24, Jesus said that people in certain cities would receive a heavier degree of punishment than others. This was because they had seen the mighty miracles that God had done through Jesus, and still had not repented.

Remember Jesus said, "*To whom much is given, of him shall much be required*" (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 4:2). Therefore more will be expected of those who have been given more. And those who reject the greater truths they have been shown will subject themselves to greater judgement. Scripture also tells us what happens to those who don't bother to find out about God's will and His Word (Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 5:13). We find therefore that we are responsible for seeking out God's truths, and ignorance will be no excuse.

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***“. . . There will be varying degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire, according to their deeds, for all those who have rebelled against God. . . ”***

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**The Bible tells us of three types of death:**

1. Being spiritually dead and yet physically alive (Matthew 8:22; 1 Timothy 5:6; 1 John 3:14; John 5:24). This refers to unsaved people who are living on the earth.

2. Being spiritually and physically dead, which is when a person dies physically while still in a state of spiritual death (Luke 16:22-23).

3. The second death, which is eternal or everlasting death in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8).

## THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF MAN

**What YOU do or do not do on this earth, will determine whether you go to heaven or hell after your physical body dies.**

It is up to each of us to choose where we will spend eternity.

**WE MAKE THIS CHOICE** by either accepting or rejecting God's free gift of salvation, through Christ Jesus. In fact by not seeking God, Who will direct us to the Cross, we are rebelling against the moral light within our conscience. Having been given this light, we are responsible for seeking and finding (Romans 1:20). Indeed God has not hidden Himself and is easy to find if we truly seek with an open heart.

**So even by not seeking truth** we rebel against our God-given conscience. Man is born separated from God and on the road to eternal death. God throws man a lifeline to enable him to escape the waters of destruction - and this lifeline is Jesus Christ. If man rejects Jesus Christ, all he then does is continue on the road to hell, having either missed or rejected the opportunity to be saved and gain eternal life. The Word tells us that some fear and reject the very thing that would set them free because they love the darkness they are already in, and want to continue in it (John 3:18-20).

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***“ . . . In fact by not seeking God, Who will direct us to the Cross, we are rebelling against the moral light within our conscience. . . ”***

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Nevertheless, man is accountable for his sin and his position. We know this because the scriptures tell us that man is without excuse to believe because the heavens declare that there is a Creator (Romans 1:20). Indeed men see God's handiwork as they look at the revelation of nature (Psalm 19:1; Acts 14:16-17). As man recognises, with an open heart, that there is a Creator, he then

becomes responsible for seeking that Creator and finding a way of communicating with Him. God promises that those who seek will find, and those who ask will receive (Matthew 7:7-8). Indeed the Lord will move heaven and earth to respond to an open heart, and a seeker of truth - to reveal Christ to that person (John 14:6).

**The Word of God** also tells us that every man has been given “*the measure of faith*” (or access to “*the measure of faith*”) to believe there is a God (Romans 12:3). **Note:** This scripture also applies to the saved who are given access to “*the measure of faith*” required for service and obedience.

This “*measure of faith*” for the heathen is really an inward moral light, contained in the conscience, which gives man the ability to acknowledge a Creator. Sin has not extinguished this gift and man’s natural inclination is to seek out his Creator. Sin will stifle this inward motivation, however, and man can, through his own choosing, simply block off to the existence of a Creator. If man denies this part of himself, he will do himself damage, for only through being open to this light can he discover God. The measure of faith is a measure of awareness of God supplied by God’s grace. Man is therefore responsible for seeking truth, but he will not discover truth on his own terms, only on God’s terms!

**God reveals Himself to man** as man is open and seeks. Man is responsible for seeking the answers to life, but those answers can only be revealed by the Father. Man cannot discover them any other way.

***JOHN 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again (born from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”***

***JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

***JOHN 3:17 For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.***

***JOHN 3:18 He who believes on Him is not condemned: but he who believes not is condemned (judged) already, because he has not believed (chosen not to believe) in the name of the only begotten Son of God.***

**We will still exist** a million years from today, for we are eternal beings.

***MATTHEW 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.***

**God's saving presence** is what is needed for us to have direct communication with the Father, and an eternal promise of heaven after physical death.

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***“. . . This “measure of faith” for the heathen is really an inward moral light, contained in the conscience, which gives man the ability to acknowledge a Creator. . . ”***

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**It is also important to note** that, if a child dies before the age of responsibility, by the law of perfect justice God would say, “This child could not have understood the Gospel at this age, and so cannot be held accountable.” The child, through God's grace and perfect justice, would then go straight to heaven. This is perfect justice, for we have a perfect and just God. Amen. The age of responsibility, however, is not a fixed or mandatory chronological age. It will vary according to individual differences such as culture, intelligence, exposure to truth, and ability to understand. While it varies from one child to the next, it represents a point in time at which the child or teenager concerned becomes personally responsible for their own response to the Gospel.

Jesus, Who is God the Word, will judge all, and He judges children under His law of perfect justice. This means that if they die before the age of responsibility, Jesus judges that they are not accountable for their spiritual position. Children are then able to

enter heaven through Jesus, man's Mediator - for there is only one way to enter heaven, and that way is through Christ Jesus.

***JOHN 14:6 Jesus said unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me."***

Jesus is the only way - there is no other name, no other means by which we can be saved.

***ACTS 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other (except Jesus): for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.***

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***“. . .It is also important to note that, if a child dies before the age of responsibility, by the law of perfect justice God would say, “This child could not have understood the Gospel at this age, and so cannot be held accountable.” The child, through God’s grace and perfect justice, would then go straight to heaven. . .”***

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## **PENALTY FOR REMAINING SEPARATED FROM GOD**

We see in the **Book of Revelation** the result of people remaining separated from God through choosing not to receive Jesus Christ into their lives. They make this choice by either not seeking truth, or by rebelling against God's Word - and ignorance, as we have seen, will be no excuse for remaining in the state of sin.

***REVELATION 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.***

***REVELATION 21:8 . . . the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and***

*whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

*REVELATION 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

*“tormented day and night forever and ever”*

These scriptures are giving us a description of what is to happen to all those who reject God’s love - Jesus Christ. When their physical body dies, that is not the end, but rather only the beginning. It is only the beginning of eternity.

It would be a terrible position to be in, if your physical body died and then you (the spirit-man) were to go to this place of eternal torment. If you were to go to hell, you would lose forever the primary power of your will.

## THE POWER OF THE WILL

When a person goes to hell, he loses the primary power of his will, which is the power to choose.

For example, if a person goes to hell, he loses control of his will so that he cannot achieve anything good in thought, or in deed, for his own benefit. To have control implies choice, and to choose is to have control - and neither choice nor control are available to those who have gone to hell.

A person in hell will have lost control of the primary power of his will, for he will have given it over to his spiritual father Satan (who is the federal head of the Kingdom of Darkness) through either rejecting God’s Son or not seeking the truth that God has put in front of man. “Death” will then own his destiny for eternity, and as a result this person will no longer have any right to choose, and so will not, in hell, be able to control his own destiny.

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***“ . . . A person in hell will have lost control of the primary power of his will, for he will have given it over to his spiritual father Satan. . . ”***

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**It is God’s Word** which will have judged the people in hell, but it is the people themselves who will have condemned themselves to this place of torment.

In this environment of death and darkness, the ability to choose is stripped from a person - for in this environment of spiritual death, there is no love and no hope. Indeed spiritual deadness contains nothing of any value to bring comfort of any kind in thought or deed.

**On earth, there are two major facets** within the structure (make-up) of the will:

- 1. The power to choose.**
- 2. The ability to acknowledge.**

In hell, the will of a person will be reduced in its effectiveness to the point of merely acknowledging their own existence, along with their pain and suffering (e.g. Luke 16:19-31) - and this does not constitute power that can effect change. This is because his or her power of ongoing choice has been forfeited and sold to death, through that person rejecting God’s grace. And the rejection of God’s grace comes about by a person either rebelling against, or not seeking and acting on the truth of the Gospel during their physical lifetime. People in hell, in acknowledging this, will feel all the pain, suffering and torment that hell can evoke, and they will not be able to use their will to block out the reality of this torment.

**Choice, the power of the will,** gives man access to the necessary power to do that which he has chosen or purposed. The will therefore acts as the trigger. Depending on which nature is yielded to, as determined by the choice made, the power to do good or evil, right or wrong, is made available. The type of power obtained comes from three possible sources:



1. The human nature yielding to the God-given conscience through conviction. The conscience does lend weight to persuade man to act in certain ways. However its influence is limited and it is not really a power as such.

2. The human nature absorbing the darkness of the sin nature - which gives the power to sin.

3. The human nature absorbing the graces and energies of the Divine Nature, giving man spiritual light and energy - the power to act righteously and so please God.

**The last power source** is only available to those in Christ. The first type of power is made available to each person when they are born into this world. However it will never in itself, for those outside Christ, bring about a proper relationship with God, or please Him (Isaiah 64:6). Also unregenerated man usually employs the power of his conscience to escape the destruction that he knows would eventuate if he went against the moral dictates of his conscience. In this the conscience becomes a tool to help one to escape from possible calamity. It should, however, also be used, with the grace and help of God, to bring about a relationship with Him. This is because the conscience of unregenerate man contains a moral light that will indeed compel him to seek for his Creator, that being Father God. This will take place if he does not block off to this light, but yields to it in seeking the Creator who will take us to Calvary, to show our hopelessness without the Saviour.

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***“ . . .In hell, the will of a person will be reduced in its effectiveness to the point of merely acknowledging their own existence, along with their pain and suffering. . . ”***

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The degree of people's eternal punishment will be in direct proportion to their crimes against God and His Word. In all of this, the law of perfect justice will be satisfied. A major fruit of the implementation of the law of perfect justice will be everlasting

peace, for at the end of the age, all evil will have been removed and dealt with. Therefore judgement will ultimately produce peace.

**The sin of rejecting Jesus Christ** has an horrific, eternal consequence of torment day and night forever and ever. Anyone who either rejects, or does not seek God through Jesus Christ, will qualify themselves for this place of eternal torment (judgement). However man is already lost before he rejects the only way of escape. He rejects or does not seek for the Creator because he desires to remain in the darkness of self-rule. The sin of his rejection of Jesus Christ comes as a result of his sinful condition rather than being the cause of it. Loving his independence, rebellion and sin, man rejects the Light that would set him free. God throws him the only life-buoy possible but he continues to swim in the sea of humanity until it is too late - and he dies in his sin.

***JOHN 12:47 And (Jesus said) if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I (as man's Redeemer) came not to judge the world, but to save the world (Jesus is speaking here of His present mission as the Saviour of the world, a mission that has lasted for 2000 years).***

***JOHN 12:48 He who rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (speaks of the "Judgement Seat of Christ" for Believers, and the "Great White Throne Judgement for unbelievers [E.S.B.]***

The words Jesus spoke came from God. So if people do not receive and act on these words, they will be judged as being the sinners that they always have been, according to the standard and authority of His Word. God's Word is based on eternal principles of justice, mercy and love. In not seeking and finding God, those who reject His words will condemn themselves to eternal torment.

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***“ . . . The degree of people’s eternal punishment will be in direct proportion to their crimes against God and His Word. . . ”***

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The Word of God tells us that this judgement (or punishment) is just, perfect and right for those who reject or do not bother to seek Him. God’s Word also tells us that man is without excuse, as he views the created world, to acknowledge there is a Creator (Romans 1:18-20). God has done all He can to bring mankind back to Himself, for He gave His best when He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). It is now up to each individual to receive God’s free gift of grace. Indeed the price has been paid and the terrible debt of sin has been cancelled for those who will only receive it.

**When a person accepts Jesus Christ** as Lord and Saviour, this guarantees that they will not go to this place of torment, as long as they continue to have faith in the finished work of Christ. Nor will they lose the power to exercise their free will, for God is love manifested, and love will never take your right to choose from you. You will remain, in Christ, for eternity, a free-willed agent.

### **GOD’S WAY IS EASY**

*Background Reading: Matthew 11:28-30*

**There are many Christians who speak against God’s Word** by complaining about His commandments and saying they are too hard. Indeed God’s commandments will be hard, if people try to obey them in their own strength. That is why the Lord has told us to wait upon Him for our strength.

***PROVERBS 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding.***

***PROVERBS 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.***

***ISAIAH 40:31 . . . they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.***

***PHILIPPIANS 4:13 I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.***

**To the unsaved person** (or carnal Christian), the commandments of God may seem “burdensome,” “heavy” and even “grievous.” People have this idea because they have no wisdom, hence no trust in God, and therefore no trust in His Word or His ability to provide them with what is needed. Being uncommitted and unyielding, they are unable to partake of the Divine Nature which not only gives the Saint the desire and power to obey God’s commands, but also brings peace, comfort and joy to those who do so. As Christians we should understand that God’s commandments are not grievous. Indeed the Word states that Jesus’ yoke is easy, and His burden light.

***MATTHEW 11:30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light (for He did not come to crush us, only the enemy).***

**Jesus’ yoke is one of meekness and humility**, which means wholehearted submission to the Father’s will. We do this by trusting in the Lord and allowing God’s Word to have supreme authority in our lives.

As we acknowledge God in all our ways and yield to the Holy Spirit, the human nature will be energized by the energies and graces of God’s holy Divine Nature. Through this process, we will obtain the strength needed to fulfill His purpose in our lives. Therefore the burden, as Christ stated, will be “*light*.”

Indeed we were created to live in relationship with our Creator so that we depend on Him for the direction and empowerment we need to avoid sin, walk in righteousness and so please Him. Then the credit for all we do which is praiseworthy goes to Him and Him alone. And this is how it should be. Man was never designed to share God’s glory. Through a humble, yielded heart we gain the power we need to do God’s will, and then direct the praise to Him.

For God “*resists the proud but gives grace unto the humble*” (James 4:6).

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***“ . . . Jesus’ yoke is one of meekness and humility, which means wholehearted submission to the Father’s will. We do this by trusting in the Lord and allowing God’s Word to have supreme authority in our lives. . . ”***

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### **THERE IS STRENGTH IN GOD’S PEACE**

Jesus said:

***JOHN 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”***

**The peace the world offers is only temporary** and provides no real strength. God’s peace, however, is eternal and gives real, ongoing strength to all who live in it. The way for us to gain God’s peace is to turn our eyes from the world and look to Jesus and His finished work on the Cross. Then as we continue to search for truth and obey God’s Word, we will have victory in areas we would not have thought possible.

We need to trust in God and be led by Him, and not live simply to appease our emotions. Just because a situation may seem comfortable to our senses or flesh does not necessarily mean that this situation is right. Nor does it mean that the so-called peace or comfort that we may be currently experiencing in this situation will last. Only the peace of God will last, as we continue to trust Him and walk in His ways.

***ROMANS 15:13 Now (may) the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing (what the Lord gives to believers rests on faith), that you may abound (overflow) in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.***

**In the process of obtaining God's peace**, persecution will come. Indeed the Word gives us a definite promise that those who live a Godly life in Christ will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). This personal suffering is not the kind which arises when we violate God's righteous laws. Rather, persecution of this kind comes when we live righteously and present a threat to the enemy. Persecution can take the form, for example, of words spoken against us by friends or relatives, having our actions and motives misinterpreted and misrepresented, or pressure being brought upon us to act like a "normal" Christian, not one who is so "extreme" - so sold out to Jesus. Such persecution has as its source the powers of darkness, using willing vessels in an attempt to dampen our faith and cause us to compromise in relation to the standards of the Word. Persecution in some countries can take more extreme forms such as disinheritance, ostracism, torture and even death. Amid persecution, the peace of God will remain constant, as we fulfill the conditions of faith and trust (Romans 15:13).

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***“. . .The peace the world offers is only temporary and provides no real strength. God's peace, however, is eternal and gives real, ongoing strength to all who live in it. . .”***

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We see both persecution and the peace of God in operation in Acts Ch.16, where Paul and Silas were beaten severely and then cast into prison with their feet in stocks. They had been unjustly accused, subjected to intense physical punishment and thrown into the darkness of the inner prison. Here, the Word of God tells us, they sang hymns of praise to God:

**ACTS 16:25** **And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed** (were praying), **and sang** (were singing) **praises unto God: and the other prisoners heard** (were listening to) **them** (they were singing and praising loudly).

This shows the incredible peace of God which was manifested in the lives of Paul and Silas as they trusted in Him, even during this time of intense persecution.

**The peace Jesus gives** is not as the world gives, for the peace the world offers comes from without and flows inwardly. God's peace, however, comes from within and flows outwardly. Such is the love of God.

We too can experience this peace as we rest in God, trusting in His promises to sustain us no matter what circumstances may arise. Indeed we can know our God is faithful in every situation.

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***“. . .The peace Jesus gives is not as the world gives, for the peace the world offers comes from without and flows inwardly. God's peace, however, comes from within and flows outwardly. . .”***

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## **TRUE LOVE IS GIVING YOUR ALL**

*Background Reading: Matthew 22:37-40*

**Unless you have given your whole life to Jesus** and said, “Everything is Yours Lord, my whole life is Yours,” you will never live fully in the power of the Divine Nature of which we are partakers. Those who do not yield themselves fully will not live in the abundance that Jesus promised. Wuest describes this as follows:

*“And so it is with the Christian who does not count upon the fact that the divine nature is implanted in his inner being. He goes on living his Christian life as best he can in the energy of his own strength, with the result that he exhibits an imitation Christian experience, not the genuine thing. But the believer who counts upon the fact that he is a possessor of the divine nature, ceases from his own struggles at living a Christian life, and avails himself of the power of God supplied in the divine nature. So the first adjustment the Christian should make is that of counting upon the fact that the*

*power of the indwelling sinful nature is broken and the divine nature imparted, and order his life on that principle."<sup>1</sup>*

(underlines added)

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***“ . . . But the believer who counts upon the fact that he is a possessor of the divine nature, ceases from his own struggles at living a Christian life, and avails himself of the power of God supplied in the divine nature. . . ”***

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Only as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit and experience the empowerment of the energies and graces of the Divine Nature will we know, in a full sense, what it means to have “*the peace of God which passes all understanding*” (Philippians 4:7). We need to give our all, “*for with the same measure that you mete withall it shall be measured to you again*” (Luke 6:38).

***EPHESIANS 3:16 That He (Jesus Christ) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (the spirit of man);***

***EPHESIANS 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,***

***EPHESIANS 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;***

***EPHESIANS 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.***



**PHILIPPIANS 4:7 *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

**True Godly love compels us to give our all.** If we hold back in any area, it is likely we will miss out on opportunities to help others come to the knowledge of whatever truths are needed in their lives to set them free. If we hold back, we will also miss opportunities that the Holy Spirit would present to us to witness to others and to bring them, often after considerable Spirit-led effort, to the foot of the Cross for salvation. The still, small voice of the Spirit will not be heard by those who are choosing to self-rule, or by those who lack focus and a desire to seek the lost. Only as we seek, find and yield to God's will are we able to be positioned to partake of the graces and energies of the Divine Nature in that area of yieldedness. Then we will be empowered to do God's will and so to please Him.

Finally, in regard to the Divine Nature, it will remain dormant in its expression in the life of the Saint unless the Believer's heart is open to the Lordship of God through Christ. In all that we do or do not do, Christ must be Lord. In other words, we must be led by the Spirit, hearing His voice (through the rhema and logos word) on the matter in all that we do - whether we go, stop, turn right or left, marry or do not marry, etc. We should consult the Lord in regard to how many children we should have, what job we should take and, of course, what church we should attend, support and give tithes and offerings into.

**All this and so much more in life** must come under Christ's Lordship. In fact, Christ is the standard, the way, and the Light by which we discern right from wrong. Or we can say, Christ, by the Spirit, reveals the Father's will. If Christ is to be Lord at an experiential level, we must absorb the energies and graces of God's very nature. But because the graces we can access are governed by God's love and the Saint's faith, we must want Christ as head of the union - for graces are accessed daily through relationship and communication at a heart level (Luke 9:23). God's love will not force itself on us, and faith from God is required if we are to make proper demands on His power as set forth in His Word. In this we become "*vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet (fit) for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work*" (2 Timothy 2:21).

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***“ . . . Finally, in regard to the Divine Nature, it will remain dormant in its expression in the life of the Saint unless the Believer’s heart is open to the Lordship of God through Christ. . . ”***

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## **OUR MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

*Background Reading: Mark 16:15-20*

**We as Christians are all called to be ministers of God**, for we have all been given “*the ministry of reconciliation*,” as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19:

***2 CORINTHIANS 5:18*** *And all things are of God, Who has reconciled (restored) us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us (every Christian) the ministry of reconciliation:*

***2 CORINTHIANS 5:19*** *To wit, that God was in Christ (by the agency of Christ), **reconciling the world unto Himself** (represents the Atonement as the work of the Blessed Trinity and the result of love, not of wrath), **not imputing their trespasses unto them** (refers to the fact that the penalty for these trespasses was imputed to Christ instead); **and has committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation.** (All Believers are to Preach the Cross in one way or the other [1 Corinthians 1:18].) (E.S.B.)*

**The purpose of “the ministry of reconciliation”** is to help reconcile people to God as we are led by the Holy Spirit to share the truth, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then the Anointing of God can convict them of the message of truth. This ministry is the calling of every Christian here on earth.

The ministry of reconciliation incorporates everything pertaining to being a Christian, for everything we do or do not do will either help or hinder the Gospel. The ministry of reconciliation encompasses the way we live and conduct ourselves (our personal

witness), and our sharing of the truth of the Gospel with others. It also includes supporting our local church and other ministries through prayer and the giving of time and finances, as the Spirit directs us. Some are called to preach while others are called to pray, and give financial support to the Gospel through particular ministries. Whatever people are called to do, they will receive equal reward for answering the call of God on their lives. This is our responsibility as Christians, to obey God in what He has called us to do, for all are needed in the work of the Kingdom (Romans 12:6-8; Colossians 3:17).

***ISAIAH 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him Who brings good tidings (the Gospel), Who publishes peace; Who brings good tidings of good, Who publishes (proclaims) salvation; Who says unto Zion, "Your God reigns!"***

This verse really speaks of the Messiah. However a secondary meaning is that He works through those who proclaim the Gospel so that our feet are His, our voice is His, etc. - and the glory belongs to Him!

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***“. . .The ministry of reconciliation incorporates everything pertaining to being a Christian, for everything we do or do not do will either help or hinder the Gospel. . .”***

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**When witnessing or preparing to do so**, we need to believe God for the Anointing needed to do a work of grace on the mind and heart of the person concerned. As Jesus said, *“without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). The Anointing is needed on our words to cause the darkness around a person’s mind and heart to be anaesthetized, so allowing the words we speak to impact upon that person’s life. We are not to argue people into heaven but to believe for God’s convicting power to be upon our words. This is because we fight a spiritual war, and *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). When

witnessing to people we should believe for the right timing, the right words and the Anointing required to make a difference. In all things we need to rely on the Spirit for direction and empowerment, for it is His work to convict people of truth, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).

We should also be careful, when witnessing, to only go to the level of our knowledge and faith, for anything beyond this could be perceived as being false. We also need to be mindful of the level of people's understanding of spiritual matters. Nevertheless, we should always be open to the leading of the Spirit, for it is only He Who knows the condition of each person's heart, and what is needed at any given time. We must also remember that "*today is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2), for eternity for each person can be but one heartbeat away. This means of course that we should not procrastinate with witnessing, but regard it as being of immediate importance. Before we do anything, however, let us always pray and seek God's wisdom regarding when, how and by what means we are to bring or support the Gospel. We cannot harass people or "Bible-bash," as some do. We should present the Gospel with all wisdom, being conscious of where people are at, and bringing the message in a way which makes sense to them. Only God knows a person's heart, and seeking His direction through the gifts of the Spirit is important in personal witnessing.

Thus we need to live according to the responsibility that comes with the ministry of reconciliation. Our main work as Christians is to share the Gospel of life and to help set the captives free, spiritually and physically.

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***“. . .When witnessing or preparing to do so, we need to believe God for the Anointing needed to do a work of grace on the mind and heart of the person concerned. . .”***

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**Sometimes, in sharing the Gospel,** knowing God has anointed our words, we will still be presented with situations where people refuse to listen. Such people may be arrogant and full of pride. In

these circumstances we should do as Jesus instructed in Matthew 10:14:

***MATTHEW 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words (when you witness to them about the Gospel), when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.***

Many times, people may not want to listen to the Gospel of Christ (or the truths of God). We may need to separate ourselves from having deep fellowship with such people for a time because they are not willing to hear what we have to say.

In cases like this, we should leave the people concerned for a season, but continue to pray for them. Given time, their attitudes and/or circumstances may change, and we may then be able to share God's truths with them again. However we should always allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in this and everything else that we do.

**We should not reject** the people themselves, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). Rather it is their attitude towards God and His Word that we should reject, and this attitude is called unbelief - or even rebellion.

We should, however, always goal to share with them and others, in wisdom and love, at any given opportunity, the hope we have in Christ. This is another reason God commands Christians to study His truths and have their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:15). It is so we can know how to answer those who are without the hope that we have in Christ, those who do not have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

*CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL*  
*FULL GOSPEL MINISTRIES*  
[crossroadsministries.org.au](http://crossroadsministries.org.au)

- 1 Wuest, Kenneth S., Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, Great Truths To Live By, pg.86.

*"We have a vision  
to see people living  
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