

1 **Suffering for Spiritual Growth**

This book is dedicated to all of us who have gone through or may be going through some form of personal suffering. In this book we will examine the problems, and divine solutions connected with all the different kinds of suffering in life. Adversity plays a major role in our life, and that is because suffering is like a parent. What responsible parents do for their children, suffering does for adults. The discipline and restraints of childhood imposed by parents are replaced by the discipline and restraints of adult life enforced by suffering. Suffering challenges the Christian to learn and utilize the divine assets God has provided. Suffering depletes our human resources, and makes us realize our total dependence upon the grace of God.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2Co 12:9-10)

Suffering impresses upon us our need for God. However, we will see in this study that suffering is not merely a warning and a restraint, but it is also a teacher and motivator as well. Misfortune does not always come to injure us. Pain and suffering not only discourages us from going in the wrong direction, but it can also help to drive us in the right direction.

"This is my comfort in my affliction, That Thy word has revived me." (Psa 119:50)

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word." (Psa 119:67)

"It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Thy statutes." (Psa 119:71)

"I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." (Psa 119:75)

The proper application of the word of God under pressure produces spiritual growth. We experience the reality that **"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1)**. As a result of using His provisions, our love for Him grows stronger, and we accelerate our spiritual advance. Whether as a protector, or as an incentive for spiritual growth, all suffering in the Christian life must be understood in relation to the Plan of God. Suffering is designed for our good, and for His glorification: He is glorified by sustaining and blessing us in any situation, whether prosperity or

adversity, it's for His own glory. That's why in the midst of the hardships and disasters of life God promises that He will never desert you, nor forsake you (Jos 1:5; Heb. 13:5).

**“Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”
(Psa 55:22)**

Rather than eliminating suffering from our lives, He gives us far greater benefits by walking with us. **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psa 23:4).**

As you grow spiritually, every stage of spiritual growth is accompanied by some form of suffering. This suffering can occur on your way to spiritual growth, and after you arrive at a certain stage. Each stage of spiritual growth contains divine assets that may be used to solve particular problems that cause, or accompany suffering. Take spiritual childhood, or the simple basic way of handling a lot of our suffering. First of all, to help the believer recall and utilize the grace of God in the midst of overwhelming pain, the divine provisions for problem solving are best described in objective language.

The power and grace of God is presented in terms of what we call the “problem-solving devices.” To some people these things may seem mechanical and technical, and the terminology may sound harsh, but there is a reason for it. Under pressure the believer needs truth. If he is coddled and babied, he may be in danger of intensifying his problem by slipping into self-pity. No one with integrity wants to feel sorry for himself. This was revealed so magnificently by our Lord when He was going to the Cross.

**And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”
(Luk 23:27-28)**

Furthermore, under stress the believer needs straight answers. He does not need a lot of beautiful language. His emotions are already highly charged, and emotionalism offers no hope of stabilizing him. Certainly the grace of God can be described in beautiful, poetic terms, but emotional stimulation will not solve the problem. In fact, it might only complicate the Christian's suffering, which is already difficult enough.

The purpose for accurate and precise terminology is to make absolutely clear to the suffering Christian that God has provided real assets that both transcend his current misery, and offer him effective help in time of need. The purpose is not to empathize or to comfort him, the purpose is to give him the strength to handle the adversities of life.

2 Problem Solving Devices in Suffering

One of the first things a believer needs when it comes to suffering is to understand the “faith-rest drill” and to claim the promises of God. Problem solving when it comes to suffering begins with the first problem solving device, “rebound” and it is accomplished through 1Jo 1:9. Remember that the Christian way of life is a supernatural way of life that demands a supernatural means of execution. The only power equivalent to meet this demand is the omnipotence, or the power of God.

"If we acknowledge [name and cite] our sins, He is faithful and righteous, with the result that He forgives us our sins [known sins] and purifies us from all unrighteousness [unknown sins]." (1Jo 1:9)

Rebound brings us to the invisible, behind-the-scenes ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. The Holy Spirit then fills or controls our soul, and gives to us the available power needed to handle the situation. We contribute nothing. We merely ensure that we give Him control of our lives by using the rebound technique (naming and citing our sins). Rebound is the believer's first responsibility. Rebound allows the believer to reside consistently in the plan of God for his life. We call it rebound because every believer fails at some time or another, and he must quickly learn how to be restored to fellowship with God, and that is done through the rebound technique. Rebound causes the believer to bounce back after failure, restoring his fellowship with God, avoiding the trap of a guilt complex.

The next problem-solving device in the Christian way of life is “faith-rest,” which

enables the believer to control his own mental attitude. Emotion is a blessing, but it can also be a terrible curse when it sweeps away reason. If emotion dominates thought in a crisis, the result can be disastrous. So, the spiritual child needs to know how to remain clearheaded when his emotions rise, how to think clearly under pressure. The accurate application of the Word of God when going through any form of suffering demands a stabilized mentality. How does the distraught and disturbed believer regain and maintain his self-control? The solution is the faith-rest drill. A confusing, complicated situation must first be reduced to utter simplicity by claiming stated promises of God.

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Heb 4:1)

Promises are designed by God to stabilize us in times of suffering.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." (Pro 3:5-6)

"Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it." (Psa 37:4-5)

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. (1Pe 5:7)

In spiritual childhood, we reach out with our faith and claim these promises. However, the faith-rest drill has far greater implications than just mixing the promises of God with our faith.

"I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for You Lord only make me to dwell in safety." (Psa 4:8)

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of all of them." (Psa 34:19)

**"Cast all your burdens upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."
(Psa 55:22)**

"And the Lord, He it is who goes before you; He will not fail you or forsake you. Fear not, neither be confused." (Deu 31:8)

The faith-rest drill is the problem solving device used by believers in all dispensations for carrying and using the shield of faith. Now that you become stabilized by divine

promises, the believer can now recall principles he has learned and eventually reach doctrinal conclusions. From the divine viewpoint he can then deal with the complexities of the situation.

Another basic problem-solving device which is vital in handle suffering is a “personal sense of destiny.” This answers the questions: "Where am I going in life?" What is the purpose of this suffering that I'm going through? What's it all about? As you learn the relevant doctrine about your own future blessings; your eager anticipation of receiving those blessings motivates you to keep advancing in the Pre-designed Plan of God. This means that to handle suffering, you must develop enforced and genuine humility. Arrogance is the believer's worst enemy. Both the immediate and long term solution to the insidious, multifaceted problem of arrogance is enforced humility. This occurs as the as the believer submits to the authority of God's system. Obedience to the divine plan means using perfect divine assets rather than trusting inferior human ability. As the believer learns more doctrine, he understands the reasons behind God's commands, and sees how His commands reveal His matchless grace and character. With a growing knowledge of Bible doctrine, enforced humility becomes genuine humility, which is the foundation for personal love for God.

The most critical issue in the believer's life is how does he solve the problem of ignorance? At salvation he knows nothing of God and His plan. The solution includes tremendous divine assets for learning, metabolizing, and applying the Mind of Christ. **For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (1Co 2:16).** This is why the Bible draws an analogy between eating food and learning doctrine, which is the believer's spiritual food (Deu 8:3; Job 23:12; Mat 4:4). Just as food must be metabolized to sustain the body, so doctrine must be metabolized before it is usable in spiritual growth, application, or problem solving. Someone may order a meal at a restaurant, and the food may be attractive to the eye, but the food nourishes him only when he eats it. Likewise, the believer learns doctrine academically, but doctrine benefits him only when he believes what he has learned.

He must unite the new doctrine heard with the rest of the doctrine already known in order for that new truth to contribute to his spiritual growth. To eliminate his ignorance, the believer must establish a firm policy of learning Bible doctrine every day. Therefore, he must always organize his day to accomplish his first priority, the assimilation of God's Word. It is through the Word of God that all suffering is met, challenged and defeated, and that's because we are able to learn obedience to God through suffering.

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. (Heb 5:8)

As the Christian moves into spiritual adulthood he finds solutions to many problems. Answers to questions like, how can he love God whom he cannot see? How can he have an objective yet positive attitude toward self, even though he knows his own flaws and weaknesses? How can he tolerate obnoxious, antagonistic people? How can he avoid being distracted by the people he loves? These are problems in relationships, and the solutions lie in virtue-love. Virtue-love includes personal love for God, spiritual self-

esteem (love for self), and impersonal unconditional love for all mankind. Virtue-love derives its strength from God Himself, the object of the believer's personal love.

Between personal love for God and impersonal love for all mankind, God applies pressure to test the believer and to accelerate his advance. These tests are designed to propel the believer into spiritual maturity. This is why you need to get your eyes off people, and on the Plan of God.

Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. (2Co 5:16)

The mature believer is a winner in life. He doesn't hold grudges against others who have wrongfully hurt him. He realizes that God has allowed the situation to happen and it is a part of God's plan for his spiritual growth. Once the mature believer reaches maturity, he becomes aware of yet another problem. Having learned the doctrine of the angelic conflict, which explains the existence of the human race and the objective of human history, he knows that God's purpose is always to demonstrate His glory. How is God glorified to the maximum? How does He express His glory in the life of a believer who already receives the magnificent blessings of maturity? The answer is evidence testing.

Evidence testing is Satan's cross examination of a mature believer whom God has called to the stand as a witness for God's character, a demonstration of God's glory. Satan attempts to discredit each witness, but spiritual maturity gives the believer the strength to face the worst that Satan can throw at him. When the believer uses divine assets under extreme duress, not only is God's perfection demonstrated to Satan, but the marvel of God's grace is also made dramatically clear. The believer's occupation with the person of Christ sustains an inner happiness that is the greatest of all the problem-solving devices (1Pe 1:6-8).

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1Pe 1:6-8)

Whether enjoying prosperity or coping with adversity, the mature believer has access to all the problem-solving devices of the PPOG. As he grows, he still uses all the problem-solving devices of spiritual childhood, but now they are reinforced with the strength of adulthood. Using the tremendous assets of the Plan of God, he sustains his spiritual momentum throughout his life, and handles suffering with such confidence that he becomes a maximum demonstration of God's perfect grace and integrity. The point is that suffering plays a major role in the believer's advance. The believer's personal determination to achieve spiritual maturity by obeying God's commands makes him capable of handling any suffering in life. Mental alertness and a readiness to use the assets God has

provided are the attitudes of the spiritual winner.

3 Self-induced Misery

We are now ready to look at the first category of suffering which is “The Law of Volitional Responsibility” also known as “Self-induced misery.” By far the most prevalent category of human suffering is self-induced misery. People in general, and believers in particular, cause themselves tremendous anguish, both within their own souls and in the overt circumstances they create.

The law of volitional responsibility recognizes that a believer's decisions have natural and logical consequences. When he makes bad decisions, suffering will naturally result. In nearly every instance of Christian suffering part, or all, of the problem can be traced back logically to the choices of the one who suffers. Before God created the human race, He decreed that man would have free will. By divine decree our decisions, or indecisions, have real repercussions for which we are responsible. Just as there are scientific laws in which science observes the faithfulness of Jesus Christ who **"upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3; Col 1:16)**, so also there are laws of human consequence in which each individual's thoughts, decisions, and actions establish the trends in his life.

Every human being has free will. We make decisions constantly, some of those decisions are good, others are bad. You probably discovered in youth that when you chose to take certain actions you were punished, but when you chose to make positive decisions, you avoided punishment, and perhaps enjoyed some measure of blessing. This principle also holds true of the spiritual life. When we follow divine protocol we are blessed; when we violate that protocol we suffer. The obvious conclusion is that we must learn God's system and abide by it. The implication of the law of volitional responsibility

is that every human being must take the responsibility for his own decisions and actions.

If properly reared, a person understands that he never blames others for his unhappiness. He acknowledges any mistakes, or wrong decisions he has made regarding relationships, activities, motives, and functions in life and fulfills the obligations he has incurred. If he suffers from causes beyond his control, he does not allow the pain to produce bitterness in his soul. Rather than poison himself with bitterness and self-pity, he makes the most of his present options and opportunities through good decisions compatible with the plan of God.

The law of volitional responsibility is clearly taught in Scripture:

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 [lives for self rather than for God] shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:7-8)

For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (Col 3:25)

"So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices." (Pro 1:31)

**For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind.
(Hos 8:7)**

Sowing and reaping can be beneficial or detrimental. Anyone who thinks they will escape the consequences of their own bad decisions deceives themselves. They assume that God has not sovereignly decreed man to have a free will. You see, if man's decisions had no effect, he would not be free. However, man is free, and this means that bad decisions have bad effects.

Arrogance is self-deception, **"The arrogance of your heart has deceived you" (Jer 49:16)**. An inflated opinion of self is the believer's great enemy, it is an illusion which will constantly undermine his life and happiness. Most suffering in life is caused by arrogance. In contrast to Bible doctrine, which orients the believer to reality, arrogance is divorcement from reality. The divine decrees guarantee that the consequences of man's decisions occur in reality, and because the arrogant believer's perception and thought are divorced from reality, his suffering will seem to come out of nowhere. The natural results of his decisions often will take him by total surprise. That's why the arrogant blames others for their suffering. Situations for which he himself is responsible will shock and disappoint him, confound his expectations, and destroy his misplaced hopes. In arrogance and ignorance, the believer will falsely blame his misfortunes on others, environment, childhood trauma, bad luck, the devil, or even God. Because he is out of touch with reality, he is ultimately illogical in his thinking. Blaming others is self-rationalization because everyone is responsible for his own decisions.

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (Jam 1:21-25)

Not all suffering under the law of volitional responsibility arises from sin, human good, or evil. Occasionally our suffering originates from nothing more than poor judgment. The very fact that we are imperfect means that our judgment will be flawed from time to time. No matter how smart we are, someone can always deceive us. Despite wisdom and objectivity, we all have areas of subjectivity and sentimentality that can distort our thinking. Intelligence is no protection, experience affords little help. Advice from friends or warnings from experts will never keep us from doing the foolish things we set our minds on doing. A great deal of suffering therefore arises from errors in human judgment. Of course one of the worst areas of poor judgment is marriage. Bad enough we are told that if we get married we will have trouble in this life, **But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. (1Co 7:28).** When you marry the wrong person, the trouble is compounded.

So, even under the law of volitional responsibility, God desires every member of the royal family to solve the problems of adversity, and prosperity through his own doctrinal thinking. God wants every believer to learn and metabolize Bible doctrine and to utilize, in his own experience, the fabulous problem-solving devices of the PPOG. No one can execute the PPOG through the doctrine in someone else's soul. Although human relationships can be supportive and encouraging to a limited degree, ultimately each believer must advance alone. In fact, the doctrine in his soul becomes the basis for perpetuating his relationships with others. He cannot lean on anyone else for the strength he must possess within himself.

The powerful problem-solving devices of the Christian way of life are not panaceas that make suffering magically disappear. Instead, they give you the ability to persevere and eventually overcome and handle the suffering magnificently. Doctrine as the solution to the problems of life is for the believer who is executing the PPOG through residence, function, and momentum inside of that plan.

The law of volitional responsibility not only explains individual suffering but also accounts for the collective suffering that man brings upon himself. A corporation may go bankrupt through the bad decisions of a few company officers and government officials, but suffering from their decisions touches many other people. The point is that with so many individuals operating in the world, each with free will, a certain amount of suffering inevitably overflows into one's life from the decisions of others, however, volition is still the cause. If not created by one's own volition, suffering results from

someone else's volition. Let me illustrate this with one man's life:

David willfully sinned when he told a lie, and the result of his lie was that an entire city was wiped out, the City of Nob (1Sa 21). Thousands were killed in battle because of David pretended to be crazy in the city of Gath! Then David failed in his military responsibility (2Sa 11:1), he should have led his troops in battle but he stayed home in Jerusalem and as a result thousands died on the battlefield. David also murdered Uriah to cover up his sin with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. He did not honor the Word of God, and disobeyed God's command about the Ark, and men were killed as a result (2Sa 6:1-13). David rejected the promises of God, and questioned God, and Joab his chief of staff even warned him about this unbelief, but he did it anyway, and 10,000 people died because of it. (1Ch 21).

The point is that the innocent suffer along with the guilty, but innocent or guilty, each believer must apply the solutions available in the PPOG through his own good decisions. If he personally fails to use the divine assets, and the problem-solving devices, the blame for his misery can fall only upon the believer himself. Ultimately there are no innocent parties because man by nature is a flawed and imperfect creature. Since the fall of Adam, no one is naturally great; nobility of soul is a rare achievement. Evidence of this Biblical principle is found in the tremendous amount of suffering in the world today. In every generation, there is always plenty of suffering. That's because each individual (excluding the humanity of Christ) is identified with Adam in his fall; each is genetically related to fallen Adam. Because of Adam's deliberate decision to sin in the Garden, we are born with genetic and environmental handicaps. To these we add our own volitional flaws from personal sin and poor judgment, creating our own suffering under the law of volitional responsibility. **For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all (Jam 2:10).** So we are all guilty of something, and therefore we should not get upset even when we suffer unjustly. **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly (1Pe 2:18-19).**

Human weakness, ignorance, and arrogance weave a tapestry of inevitable suffering for many people. However, we are not doomed to lives of misery and despair by our handicaps. The principle of grace is far more powerful than the unavoidable law of volitional responsibility. This means that while man manufactures his own problems, and resultant suffering, God manufactures solutions, and blessings in the midst of suffering.

There are some that do not like this principle. They want to see people reap what they sow, and do not want forgiveness to come in and heal their lives from those bad decisions. However, it can and it does. We are responsible to rebound and move on in our Christian lives rather than be enslaved to past sins by bitterness, or a guilt complex. Any suffering that our sins brings about is converted by rebound from cursing to blessing. Although we may be the cause of our own pain, our situation has now become an opportunity to utilize divine assets, to see God's provisions in action, to grow in grace.

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. (Psa 130:3-4)

4 **Our Responsibility to Others**

Since we are responsible for all of our decisions, what is our obligation to people who have been hurt by our sins? What is our responsibility to those harmed by our bad judgment? Through rebound our sins are forgiven, and we are restored to fellowship with God, however our sins may continue to have injurious effects on other people. Even though we have avoided chain sinning, and have proceeded to apply doctrine in our own lives, our sins may well continue to effect others.

Rebound and the isolation of sin are marvelous problem-solving devices supplied by the grace of God, but they give us no excuse for irresponsibility toward others. Rebound is a license for spiritual growth, never a license for sin. Much less important than our relationship with God, but still part of the believer's volitional responsibility, is the fulfillment of his obligations to other people. Every situation is different; each believer must apply doctrine for himself. There is no one solution by which the Christian resolves his human relationships, but certain Biblical principles must guide his thinking and application.

Responsibility to people we have harmed lies between two extremes that we must avoid. We must not be insensitive, nor should we allow ourselves to be enslaved by anyone's implacability. In other words, we are not to ignore the just cause of anyone who suffers because of our decisions, but neither should we be motivated by fear, or a guilt complex. Between these two erroneous extremes lies our responsibility. If the suffering we cause can be relieved, we should go to the extent that justice, sensitivity, and common sense dictate in easing the situation. Often the problem is complex, and usually both parties in the dispute are guilty in some degree. We should be thoughtful, generous, and walk the extra mile (Mat 5:41). But when nothing more can be done, we must leave the situation in the Lord's hands for solution as we press on in our Christian lives (2Sa 12:13).

No matter whose volition originally causes the suffering, each person is ultimately responsible for applying Bible doctrine in his own life. Above all else, the believer lives his life as unto the Lord, not as unto people. This is not to be construed as ignoring the human dimension of the problem, but the believer's application of the law of volitional responsibility does not mortgage his future to pay for his past failures. Instead, the PPOG demands the virtues of humility, personal love for God, and impersonal love toward other people.

Bad decisions make suffering inevitable, and when a believer commits a sin, he must take responsibility for its consequences toward God, self, and others. In the devil's world a certain amount of suffering is unavoidable, but self-induced misery can always be avoided. The key is found in the application of truth resident in the soul. All truth is ultimately based on the absolute person of God, and all human integrity is loyalty to some category of truth. When inculcated with truth, the human soul can triumph over terrible adversity. The believer is responsible for most of his own suffering. The solution is reversing the trend. Rather than make bad decisions, the believer must begin to make good decisions, which also have the logical repercussions of good results. The believer who obeys the commands of God frees the omnipotence of God to advance and bless him. This means that he must learn Bible doctrine. Only the believer who understands, and properly uses the problem-solving devices available to him fulfills his destiny in the Plan of God. Divine protocol is precise, **"God is not a God of confusion or sloppiness" (1Co 14:33)**. The rebound prayer, for example, is the means of re-entering the PPOG, and of restoring the ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. But even a precisely accurate rebound prayer generally does not cause pain to instantly, magically cease.

In reaction to pain, prayer is often taken out of its protocol context, and falsely applied to suffering. Prayer is a weapon for the strong, not a crutch for the weak. Prayer has many wonderful applications within the rules God has laid down, but no amount of prayer will reverse the natural results of bad decisions. When a believer prays for himself or asks others to pray for him because he is hurting from bad decisions, he may be hoping prayer will achieve what it was never designed to accomplish. If he merely wishes his suffering to end, he wants God to suspend the law of volitional responsibility, change His entire plan for the human race, and somehow miraculously make the pain go away. The source of the suffering is the wrong decisions the believer himself has made-regarding business, or personal relationships, or when facing temptation or sin.

There are divine solutions to suffering, which we are studying, but imploring God for relief is not one of them. In fact, the removal of suffering might deny the believer a special blessing available to him only through the suffering. The PPOG establishes the correct procedure to use; the believer must learn and obey the system God has established. Therefore the ignorance and confusion of believers who have never learned the protocol of the Christian life can only intensify their suffering. So most Christian suffering arises from the believer's own thoughts, decisions, and actions. One bad decision follows another until his life is unbearable. He makes a mess of his present experience and destroys his future options. No one can devastate a person's life as he can himself.

By now, it should be apparent that most Christian suffering arises from the believer's own thoughts, decisions, and actions.

5

Understanding the Faithfulness of God

There are other reasons for suffering that we could note in some detail, such as divine discipline, providential preventive suffering, momentum testing, and evidence testing. However, what I would like to note for the rest of this book is the most important principle that you need to understand no matter what you are going through, and that is THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Ultimately, if you understand the Faithfulness of God, you will be able to handle any form of suffering in life, and that includes the following:

Personal disaster testing, which is designed as suffering for blessing for acceleration of momentum or for warning of cosmic involvement, in which case divine discipline becomes involved.

Historical disaster, collective disaster, or national disaster testing related to the bad decisions of others in which you are involved by association. For example, a lot of people suffer unfairly when the president decides to go to war.

Physical pain or mental pain and anguish.

Crime where you are the victim.

Persecution (not paranoia).

Privation, meaning hunger, thirst, exposure, fatigue.

Loss of loved ones, property, success, money, etc.

Disease and handicaps.

Violence, crime, terrorism, dope, murder.

Warfare.

Weather includes heat, cold, storm, blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes.

Loss of wealth.

Divorce

I'm sure you could add to this list. However, before we go on to the Faithfulness of God, read this poem.

WHY

I've sat beside a tiny crib and watched a baby die as parents slowly turned toward me to ask, Oh pastor why.

I've held the youthful husband's head and felt deaths sting and sigh. A widow looks with tears and said, dear pastor tell me why.

I've seen a gold star mother weep and hold a picture nigh her lonely breast and softly ask, why Pastor, why?

I've walked away from the cemetery where stillborn babies lie. A mother stretches empty arms and asked me Pastor why.

I've watched my drunken father leave our home and say goodbye. While I looked into my mother's face I asked please tell me why.

I've heard the white tip-tapping cane which leads a blinded eye and then a darkened lonely voice cries, Preacher show me why.

I've caught a fiancé's burning tears and heard her lonely cry.

She held an unused wedding gown and shouted, Oh pastor why.

I've heard a cancer patient say it is gain for me to die then looked into his daughter's face and mutely whisper why.

I've seen my mother stand besides two tiny graves and cry and though she never let me know, I know she wondered why.

I've heard an orphan faintly say who gazed into the sky though Mom and Dad have gone away my Preacher will know why.

I tip-toed to my Father's throne so timid and so shy to say Dear God, some of your own are wanting to know why.

I heard Him say so tenderly their eye's I'll gladly dry,
though they must look through faith today, tomorrow they'll know why.

If now they find the reason that their hopes have gone awry,
in heaven they will miss the joy of hearing me tell them why.

And, so I found it pleases Him when I can testify, I'll trust my God to do what's best and wait to find out why.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is only One Person who is totally faithful to you, and that is God. God is perfect, fair, and immutable in all that He is, and all that He does. Divine faithfulness is God's grace expression to the believer with His perfect character as the basis for this expression. Since faithfulness hinges on the essence of God, He will be all these things to you as well:

This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I have hope in Him." The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.

(Lam 3:21-25)

God can be faithful to us because of propitiation, which means satisfaction, and here it refers to the fact that God the Father is satisfied with the sacrificial ministry of our Lord on the Cross. Through propitiation, our Lord satisfied the justice and righteousness of the Father. Because of this part of our Lord's work on the Cross, propitiation is known as the God-ward side of salvation, which was done for the sake of God's integrity, or holiness. The justice of God judges our sins, and the integrity of God is satisfied with that judgment.

Propitiation frees the justice of God to immediately impute to anyone who believes in Christ the righteousness of God (which is one side of His integrity; the other being His justice). This is the "down payment" on our salvation. God's faithfulness does not depend upon your spiritual status, but rather, it depends only on who and what God is. Since propitiation removes any compromise of the essence of God, He is free to extend His faithfulness to us. Divine faithfulness manifests itself in divine discipline to the apostate believer, and in blessing to the mature believer. All faithfulness in the human realm resides, first of all, in the soul. Faithfulness is an attitude toward someone, or something in life that you love, respect, or admire; or whose authority you recognize. As such, your life, and everything you have are a matter of God's faithfulness to you, and a testament to the fact that He loves you every moment of your entire life.

6

God's Faithfulness to the Angelic Race

The faithfulness of God is revealed from eternity past, long before the first angel was created, to eternity future, which will be long after human history has ended. God provided the angelic race with perfect environment and perfect happiness, yet Satan, and one third of the angels, rejected His plan for their lives, and turned on Him. God could have immediately thrown them into the lake of fire, instead He reached out to them, and offered them some form of salvation. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that the entire angelic race eventually fell, but that two thirds of them accepted the deliverance that was offered to them. From this we know that there is no perfect angel, and no angel worthy of our praise and worship, not even Michael who is said to be the greatest of the archangels:

“To which of the angels has He [God the Father] ever said, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?’” (Heb 1:13)

Even after Satan and his followers rejected this tremendous manifestation of the grace of God, and were sentenced to the lake of fire, God granted them an appeal trial. As a result, God created a third party to demonstrate His perfect justice and righteousness; and this is man's role in the angelic conflict. The very fact that Satan, and his demons are still allowed to roam planet earth is a tribute to the faithfulness and justice of God toward His creatures, even the most evil. The only One to ever remain perfectly holy is the Lord Jesus Christ:

I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Rev 5:1-9)

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is

called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (Rev 19:11)

7

God's Faithfulness to the Unbeliever

We are beneficiaries of God's faithfulness long before we even become born again and saved. The very fact that we are kept alive until the day we believe in Jesus Christ is dependent on His faithfulness:

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Mat 5:44-45)

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. (Rev 4:11)

Likewise, our clothing, shelter, food, and even the air we breathe every day of our lives depends on His faithfulness. All so-called "scientific laws" are solid proof of the unflinching faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the creator and preserver of the universe (Col 1:14-17; Heb 1:3; Rev 4:11).

In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things have been created [by] Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Col 1:14-17)

And He [the Lord Jesus Christ] is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. (Heb 1:3a)

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. (Rev 4:11)

Above all, He sent His beloved Son to take our place on the Cross and die for our sins, even when we were still His enemies:

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we

**were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
(Rom 5:6-10)**

Although God could end our lives at any moment, He chooses to give us every opportunity to believe upon His Son.

Salvation is the greatest manifestation of the faithfulness of God. In eternity past, before man even had the chance to do anything for Him, God devised the plan for salvation:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:3-6)

As part of His plan, He reveals the Gospel, and our need for a Savior through any and all means necessary. It might be through nature, the stars (Gen 15:5-6; Psa 50:6; Psa 68:33-34; Psa 89:5; Psa 97:6; Psa 147:4), God-consciousness at the age of accountability, or Gospel hearing (through the spoken word or written Word). Once revealed, God the Holy Spirit, in common grace, acts as a human spirit for the spiritually dead unbeliever so that he can understand the Gospel message.

8

God's Faithfulness to the Believer

God's faithfulness to all believers in rebound and recovery, as stated in 1Jo 1:9 says, **"if we acknowledge [name and cite] our sins, he is faithful and righteous, with the result that he forgives us our sins [known sins] and purifies us from all unrighteousness [unknown sins]."** That is, when we name or cite the sins that we know that we have committed, God is faithful to forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness, which refers to the unknown sins. The same principle is taught in the following passages:

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. (1Co 11:31)

Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, declares the Lord. (Jer 3:13)

I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah. (Psa 32:5)

For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin. (Psa 38:18)

God knew in eternity past all of the sins that we would ever commit. God the Father imputed those sins to the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and judged them. Therefore, God is impressed only with Jesus Christ, and His sacrificial work on behalf of us sinners. As such, God is justified to forgive us because He has been propitiated, or satisfied, by the sacrifice of His perfect Son. As a result, there is no compromise of His integrity when He faithfully forgives us as we name and cite our sins.

A very important principle emerges here: There is no merit in naming a sin. Although legalism says you must feel sorry in order to be forgiven, grace says that the way you feel is inconsequential, and not the issue. When we name and cite our sins, God faithfully forgives us, regardless of how we feel. Therefore, you can forget the sin, and move on immediately.

There are four mechanics involved in rebound:

1. Name it (1Jo 1:9).
2. Isolate it (Heb 12:15).
3. Forget it (Phi 3:13).
4. Keep moving (Phi 3:14).

This concept poses a major problem with legalistic believers, and those who are influenced by self-righteous arrogance. Arrogant believers will claim that you can commit a sin that will cause God to abandon you, and refuse to forgive you. However, God treats us in grace, but that grace is never a license to sin; rather it is the motivation to press on to spiritual maturity. Therefore, the basis of God's faithfulness is His integrity, while the expression of His faithfulness is His grace.

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (Jam 1:17)
God's faithfulness is manifested in His perfect plan.

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Co 1:9)

We were "called" to salvation in eternity past, when God was already aware of all of our failures. God found a way to lead us through His grace plan without any compromise of His essence. Knowing every sin, every human good deed, and every evil act we would ever commit, God still selected us to have human life at birth, and elected us to equal privilege, and equal opportunity at salvation. In His faithfulness, God has provided for every believer His very own plan in which to function, as the basis for equal opportunity to reach spiritual maturity.

God's faithfulness is manifested in logistical grace provision and super-grace blessing:

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1Th 5:24)

For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him. (Job 23:14)

You should never worry about the basic necessities needed to sustain your life because God will provide everything you will ever need. It took more work for God to find a way to save us than it does for Him to bless us in time. If He could do the most for us at salvation, then it follows, under the principle of "a fortiori," that He can provide the lesser blessing of logistical grace support in time. "A fortiori" is a Latin phrase meaning "with stronger reason." It is a system of logic that uses comparisons; it is equivalent to the Greek phrase "pollo mallon," translated "much more" in passages such as Rom 5:6-10; Rom 5:15-20. It is a conclusion compared with another conclusion, or recognized fact, and implied to be even more certain, or inescapable, than the two conclusions it combines.

Under this type of reasoning, if God already gave us the greatest gift of all, that being His beloved Son, then it logically follows that He will give us everything else that we need. This means that God's perfect faithfulness to you in eternity past inevitably leads to His perfect faithfulness to you in time. There never was a time in which God was not totally faithful to you. If God was faithful to you in eternity past, He can only be faithful

to you in time, as well as in eternity future. Ultimately, God is faithful to His Royal Family, and we're are to, **hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Heb 10:23).**

The most fantastic escrow blessings are on deposit for you, and are protected by the faithfulness of God. The more doctrine you have in your soul, the more you see God's perfect character, and the closer you advance to spiritual maturity. As a result, the things around you that were formerly distracting to your spiritual growth become less and less important. Attacks, and adversities, from the kingdom of darkness no longer have the same power as they used to because God remains faithful to the believer in the angelic conflict. This is a principal that the Apostle Paul pointed out to the church at Thyatira, **"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th 3:3).** God is faithful to protect and guard you in the midst of the unseen angelic battle which is fought daily all around you.

Faithful Believers

God reveals His faithfulness in testing believers. However, God will not allow us to be tested or tempted beyond our capacity and capability to pass the test or to say "No" to the temptation.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1Co 10:13)

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. (2Co 4:17)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Rom 8:18)

As believers, we are constantly tested by God in the area of logistical grace support. Logistical grace is defined as divine planning, support, provision, and blessing for the execution of the Pre-designed Plan of God by the Royal Family. It is necessary for the fulfillment of God's will, purpose, and plan for our lives.

Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith! And do not seek what you will eat, and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. (Luk 12:27-31)

Not only are we tested with regard to logistical grace support, but also we are tested concerning our love for Bible doctrine as well as our social life, loved ones, families, failures, and other distractions. Prior to reaching the different stages of spiritual growth, we must all pass through various forms of suffering for blessing that the Lord brings into our life. Even in spiritual maturity we face testing, just as Abraham did when he was commanded to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. Although we are tested in all stages of spiritual growth, it is never beyond our capacity. As a part of God's faithfulness, He always provides the doctrine (or the opportunity to receive the doctrine) necessary to pass each test before it comes. Therefore, Bible doctrine is our way of escape from each test, and that doctrine is provided by the faithfulness of God. Ultimately, God will never give us something for which we do not have the capacity, be it blessing or testing.

God's faithfulness becomes a reality as the believer advances and reaches spiritual maturity. This principle is noted by the story of Sarah who **"received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised"** (Heb 11:11). Furthermore, the Apostle Paul emphasized God's promise to remain faithful to us when he said to **"let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you'"** (Heb 13:5).

Unfaithful Believers

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself .(2 Ti 2:13)

Even if we reject and deny God, He cannot cease to be faithful to us because He has perfect character and can never be anything less than what he is; that being absolute faithfulness and immutability. In fact, God is even faithful in disciplining the apostate believer to protect him from going too far. But God's faithfulness promises that the apostate believer, even after an entire lifetime of rejection of Bible doctrine, still goes to heaven just as surely as the Apostle Paul went to heaven. God's faithfulness is magnified in relation to the apostate believer; **"For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed"** (Mal 3:6).

9 God's Love

Divine Personal and Impersonal Love

There are two categories of divine love: personal love and impersonal love. While God's personal love is directed toward objects of His affection that are worthy of this type of love, His impersonal love is directed toward every one of His creatures regardless of their worthiness. The latter of the two loves is based on who and what God is, and not on the merit of any creature. These two categories of God's love are expressed in His policy of love, which is called grace. This is how God manifests Himself to His creation.

Since God is perfect, His personal love can be directed toward only that which also possesses perfect righteousness. The object of God's infinite, eternal, unchangeable love must always be absolute perfection, which exists only in divine righteousness. That is, His personal love cannot be directed toward anything that is less than perfect. Additionally, all three members of the Godhead have identical essence, which includes the same virtue, righteousness, justice, and love. This means that each of them loves the other with a perfect love based on the perfect essence that each possesses. Because of this, each One has divine self-esteem, and never feels threatened by another member of the Trinity. Likewise, no member of the Trinity ever feels threatened by any creature's failure or rebellion. Satan's fall, man's fall, and any other event that is contrary to His perfect nature will never disturb His self-esteem or the function of His perfect love.

Personal love from a member of the Trinity demands that the object of that love be perfect. For an individual to become the recipient of this love, he must possess the righteousness of God. On our own this is impossible, but when anyone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, one of at least forty grace blessings he receives is the righteousness of Christ. Now all three members of the Trinity can personally love all who believe in Christ because they have received the imputation of divine righteousness. God designed a way to love us personally by giving us His own divine righteousness. Because of His personal love for believers, God **“predestined [them] to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention [graciousness] of His will” (Eph 1:5)**. Everything that God the Father has given to the Lord Jesus Christ, He has also given to those who believe in His name. In His grace, when God looks upon a believer, He sees His perfect Son; and it is His will to bless that believer, just as He did Christ.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ

(by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:4-10)

On the other hand, divine impersonal love is the love of God that is directed toward His imperfect creatures. It is a love that places all of the merit on the subject (God) and none on the object (creatures); it is a love that depends entirely on who and what God is, and has its basis in His perfect integrity. Since God has perfect holiness, integrity, and virtue, His love follows this same pattern. His divine love is divorced from any unfairness, bias, sin, human good, or evil. Because of this, He can love spiritually dead mankind solely on the basis of His own perfect character and divine self-esteem. From the state of His perfection, God can love all mankind in spiritual death, even though they have an old sin nature that is disgusting to Him. Since there is no way that God can love man personally through physical birth, because man is born spiritually dead, with a righteousness as worthless as “filthy rags,” it is through impersonal love that God is able to love sinful man.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isa 64:6)

As a consequence of being born spiritually dead and totally helpless in our ability to maintain a relationship with God, it is impossible for Him to love us based on our attractiveness to Him. The only thing that can satisfy God in regard to our sins is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. We become the objects of His personal love when we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit and believe in this so great salvation. It is through His impersonal love that He was motivated to send His Beloved Son to die for the sins of the entire world, so that mankind could have an opportunity to have a relationship with Him. **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (Joh 3:16).**

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1Jo 4:10)

Our Lord’s impersonal love was demonstrated by His perfect motivation and the integrity He showed in going to the Cross, which was based on His personal love for God the Father. He obeyed the Father’s will; He did not feel threatened in His humanity because He had impersonal love toward all who maltreated, maligned, hated, and despised Him. This demonstration of our Lord’s virtue-love as a problem-solving device

sets the pattern for us. Therefore, it is God who was the initiator of love, and we are to follow His example and we are to **“love, because He first loved us” (1Jo 4:19)**. Divine impersonal love becomes the pattern for the impersonal love of the believer, which is the problem-solving device designed for all the problems that come from interaction with people.

Believers are commanded to love the brethren as well as all mankind. This is impossible to accomplish with personal love for two reasons: First, we cannot love people we do not even know, and secondly, there are people who are simply impossible to love for who they are. However, using God’s impersonal love, it is possible to love all men based on the divine righteousness that indwells us.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jo 13:34-35)

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us... And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1Jo 4:8-12,16)

Therefore, we have the capacity to love because God first loved us and provided everything we need. As you grow in the spiritual life, you will feel less and less threatened by any member of the human race, and your impersonal love toward the human race will grow. Since impersonal love emphasizes your virtue, you can truly love the entire human race because you never feel inferior to anyone. As a result, you know yourself, and you are certain that God loves you with a deep, personal love and has a special tailor made plan just for you.

Divine Love and the Attributes of God

1Jo 4:8 teaches the well-known principle that “God is love.” As a part of His essence, God is love. His love, along with the rest of His divine attributes, makes up who and what He is. Divine love cannot exist apart from the rest of the divine attributes. For example, God is eternal and immutable; therefore, His love is unchanging and enduring. Additionally, His love always depends on His character and never depends in any way on His creatures or seeks their approval; it exists by means of no source other than Him. With that, it is necessary for us to note divine love as it relates to God’s other attributes.

1. Love and Eternal Life: God is eternal; therefore, His love is eternal. God and His love have always existed. **I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have**

drawn you with lovingkindness (Jer 31:3).

2. Love and Sovereignty: God is sovereign; therefore, His love is self-motivated and totally compatible with His divine essence. Sovereignty means that God is supreme in His command and has authority over all things. There is no higher power in the universe than God, and since His attributes function perfectly together, including love and sovereignty, He never makes a decision apart from His love. In all that God decrees, and in all that God allows, His motivation is always perfect and pure. The sovereign love of God toward all mankind is expressed in many passages:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1Ti 2:3-4)

3. Love and Holiness: God is holy, which means perfectly just and righteous. Therefore, the love of God possesses perfect integrity, justice, fairness, and righteousness. The stability of divine love is His holiness. God cannot tempt nor solicit sin, God cannot sponsor evil, human good or any form of self-righteousness or legalism. Since God's love is compatible with His holiness, it is perfect in every function; always fair and impeccable, and never subject to corruption. The question may be asked, "How can we who are imperfect ever have fellowship with God who is totally perfect and impeccable?" The answer is that God the Father took notice of this issue billions of years ago in eternity past, and He made a provision through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
(2 Co 5:21)**

4. Love and Immutability: God is immutable; therefore, His love is unchangeable, stable, and compatible with the rest of His perfect character. His love can never be corrupted by anyone or anything. Since God always has been love and always will be love, He never "falls in love" or reacts to us; His love remains the same, whether or not it has an object to love. Because God is unchangeable, His love cannot increase or decrease, improve, or decline; it cannot be changed by any form of human failure or degeneracy.

**For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.
(Mal 3:5-6)**

**The Lord's lovingkindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.
(Lam 3:22)**

But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. (Psa 89:33)

The sinfulness, arrogance, or evil of man cannot change or influence either the love of

God or the integrity of God. This is a difficult concept for men to understand, because man is unstable and always changing, whereas God always remains consistent with His own perfect character.

5. Love and Omniscience: God is also omniscient, or all-knowing; there was never a time when God did not know everything. He has perfect, unlimited knowledge of all actual events that ever have, or ever will take place, as well as all the infinite possibilities. God has always known every human thought, motive, and action that would ever occur. God has never had to learn anything; He has always known all things. God is omniscient, He has always known that man would fail, yet He still chose to love us and has provided a perfect solution to every problem we would ever face.

Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mat 10:29-31)

He knows what is best for those who have put their trust in Him. Although we may not understand the adversities and the sufferings that come into our lives, in the end we will discover that God knew all along exactly what we needed and what was best for us.

**Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter."
(Joh 13:7)**

I will rejoice and be glad in Thy lovingkindness, because Thou hast seen my affliction; Thou hast known the troubles of my soul. (Psa 31:7)

6. Love and Omnipotence: God is omnipotent, all powerful, and there is nothing that He cannot do if He so chooses; His power always works in perfect compatibility with the rest of His attributes. With His perfect love towards believers and His omnipotence, He can love us personally forever because of the divine righteousness indwelling us, and nothing can ever separate us from that love.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38-39)

Love and Veracity: God is veracity, which means that God is perfect truth. It is impossible for Him to lie; He can only reveal Himself in terms of absolute truth. Divine love is rooted in every doctrine, and every form of truth that resides in His perfect system of thinking. There is no divine love apart from what is taught in Bible doctrine. Since Bible doctrine is absolute truth, He always reveals grace and mercy with His truth. His love and truth always function together.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him

be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity, Amen. (2Pe 3:18)

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth.” (Exo 34:6)

Thou, O LORD, wilt not withhold Thy compassion from me; Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth will continually preserve me. (Psa 40:11)

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (Psa 85:10)

8. Love and Omnipresence: God is omnipresent. He is infinite, without boundaries or limitation. Infinity characterizes all that God does, including the function of His divine love. He has infinite energy and power with which to love. God ever gets tired of loving us and He always has the power to express His love.

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. (Psa 36:5)

9. Love and Justice: There is a special relationship that exists between the love of God and the justice of God. Very few believers realize that man’s point of contact with God is His justice, not His love. God deals with mankind through His justice; it was the justice of God that judged the sins of fallen man on the Cross, and it is the justice of God that imputes divine righteousness to all believers, qualifying them for logistical grace support and blessings. Grace is the function of the justice of God in providing blessing for the human race under the laws of divine establishment, and for the believer under the Pre-designed Plan of God. If the unbeliever follows the laws of divine establishment, there is blessing for him from God, but the believer has the potential to be blessed in a far greater capacity than the unbeliever. Under the mechanics of logistical grace blessing, all blessing that comes to the believer originates from the justice of God, and is imputed to the indwelling righteousness of God in us. Therefore, logistical grace depends on both aspects of God’s holiness. God sustains and supports all believers daily, providing fantastic grace blessings above and beyond what is required to keep us alive. He provides these blessings to winners and losers alike. Divine love is God’s motivation for blessing, but it is not the reason. He blesses us because His divine justice has been protected through the sacrifice of His perfect Son on the Cross, and He is now free to express His love through His policy of grace. Divine love is incorruptible, unchanging, infinite, immutable, and virtuous. God has a perfect, endless capacity for love; this principle is in view wherever His everlasting lovingkindness is mentioned.

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. (Hos 14:4)

Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He

delights in unchanging love. (Mic 7:18)

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (Joh 13:1)

Virtue-Love of the Lord Carried Over to the Church-age

As undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person, our Lord possesses two categories of perfect virtue-love.

Jesus Christ, as God, has perfect virtue-love, and Jesus Christ as impeccable humanity has perfect virtue-love. At the time of His virgin birth, Jesus, as true humanity, was given His own uniquely designed plan from God the Father. Functioning inside this plan, our Lord rapidly advanced spiritually, first learning personal love for God the Father, then developing impersonal love for all mankind. As He grew to spiritual maturity, He had acquired all that was necessary to pass every test required of Him. Never wavering in the Father's plan, He remained impeccable, and was qualified to go to the Cross, as the last Adam, to be judged for the sins of all mankind. From the doctrine in His soul, our Lord derived perfect spiritual self-esteem. He never lost His poise or His focus. His motivational virtue in carrying out His Father's plan is expressed in **"You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion" (Mat 26:2)**. It pleased our Lord to do all that the Father had commanded Him, and He did it for three reasons:

His personal love for the Father.

His personal love for all believers.

His impersonal love for all mankind.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Jo 13:34)

Many times in the New Testament, our Lord introduced something new. He spoke of a new teaching, a new covenant, and a new love. This new love was to become the great power of the Church-age; God's perfect and eternal impersonal love became the pattern for us to emulate in this present dispensation. God has given Church-age believers two great patterns to follow in solving their own problems. First, as the believer grows in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he will be developing personal love for God, and learning to concentrate on Him, instead of his problems. Secondly, through spiritual growth, the believer's impersonal love toward all mankind will develop to the point where all problems and situations will naturally be handled with grace and wisdom. There will never be a problem that does not have a solution and blessing attached to it. Every time we use God's love and power to solve a problem, we bring glory to Him, and His justice can then give us greater blessings.

The Church-age believer has access to God's love at the moment of salvation, but he must diligently take in Bible doctrine in order to fully utilize it. The function of God's perfect love in the believer's life is the monopoly of those who operate within the Pre-

designed Plan of God for the Church-age. Apart from the divine power given to us in this divine plan, one has no capacity for divine love. From His perfect essence, God has provided for us so that we can live far above and beyond anything the world has to offer. Life in the plan of God means an active relationship with God; we too can live with virtue, honor, integrity, morality, and love, sharing His love with all who cross our paths. Based on the pattern of His own divine love, God has designed for us a virtue that breaks the shackles of slavery to the cosmic system. Satan has enslaved the people of this world, and those chains can only be broken through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and life inside the Pre-designed Plan of God.

Biblical Principles of Divine Love

The Lord's lovingkindness is everlasting, it never ends. His infinite integrity, and eternal virtue are unchanging, and this means an unlimited capacity for love. God gives of Himself whether there is an occasion to or not. Divine love is self-sacrificing.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1-2)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (Eph 5:25)

**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
(1 Jo 4:10)**

2. God's love is never cancelled or changed because of anything His divine omniscience knows about us. He knew billions of years ago about our sins and failures, but His knowledge of these things never affected His love.

Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. (Mic 7:18)

**But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
(Deu 7:8)**

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. (Jer 31:3)

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (Joh 13:1)

3. Divine love is rooted in every doctrine, and form of knowledge that resides in God's perfect system of thinking. He does not fall in love, nor does His love increase or decrease based on our decisions. His love cannot be compromised, corrupted, or bribed by human deeds.

4. God's love is never frustrated or disappointed. There is no failure, sin, or evil we can commit that can stop Him from loving. His love is self-motivating and needs no reason to love.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. (Deu 7:7)

He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. (Deu 10:18)

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. (Isa 63:9)

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. (Hos 14:4)

5. God's love exists with or without an object because it is a part of who He is. It is not sustained by attraction, rapport, good works, or any category of human merit. Human good, morality, and self-righteousness are not the basis of God extending His love to mankind.

6. Since God's love is perfectly virtuous, it cannot be divorced from His holiness or any other divine attribute. He is perfect and eternal in His righteousness and justice; therefore, He cannot be anything less than perfect and eternal in the function of His love.

7. God's love is permanent, stable, and virtuous, and it is a problem-solving device to be used by the believer in the plan of God. It is totally devoid of sin, evil, and human good, and is the absolute standard for us while facing life's circumstances.

8. God's love exists eternally, it is not sustained by any other source. God's love it does not improve, decline, grow weak, or grow strong. We cannot equate God's love with human love since it is free from hypocrisy, flattery, and any other form of patronizing influence. It has none of the unstable characteristics of human love.

9. God's love is free to forgive because divine justice has been propitiated by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. (Rom 3:25)

We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 Jo 2:1b-2)

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 Jo 4:10-11)

**And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
(Col 2:13-14)**

10 Faithfulness as a Part of God's Character

Faithfulness is the consistency and stability of God. It means that God can

never change His essence or be unfair to anyone. Faithfulness is the perfect expression of God's essence; it is not possible for Him to be inconsistent or compromise His essence. God is consistent with Himself; therefore, He is faithful and consistent with us. That is, God keeps His Word. God has never made a promise that He has not kept (Psa 119). There has never been a time at which God was unfaithful.

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. (Hos 14:4)

It is blasphemy to think that God's faithfulness could fail even for a moment. Unfaithfulness is totally incompatible with the very nature and essence of God (Mal 3:6). The very existence, function, and blessings of the Royal Family of God, both now and forever, depend on the faithfulness and character of God acting on our behalf through His justice. God is always prepared and He is never caught off guard. How refreshing it is to know that in the midst of the devil's world there is One who is faithful. He is faithful in all things, at all times, to all His creatures, even unto the end.

Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments. (Deu 7:9)

This quality is essential to His being; without it, He would not be God. **The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail (Lam 3:22).** It is one thing to accept the faithfulness of God as truth, but it is another thing to act upon it. God is faithful to us, and He is faithful to tell us the good along with the bad. He has faithfully described the ruin to which negative volition toward doctrine leads us and He has faithfully diagnosed the terrible results and effects of sin. God is faithful in all things. The Bible reveals many ways in which God is faithful. For instance, God is faithful in keeping His promises.

For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are "yes," wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. (2Co 1:20)

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Num 23:19)

Consider all the rebellion of the children of Israel and God's unceasing faithfulness to them. Many times they were faithless, but He was always faithful because it is impossible for Him to lie (Tit 1:2). The permanence of God's character guarantees the fulfillment of His promises. Isa 54:4-10 has an application for us and, though it was said to the Jews, we must realize how much more applicable it is for the Church.

"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is

called the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. "For this is like the days of Noah to Me; when I swore that the waters of Noah should not flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the Lord who has compassion on you (Isa 54:4-10).

In 1Pe 4:19, when addressing believers who were going through suffering, Peter instructed them to **"entrust [their] soul to the faithful Creator who will do what is right!"** God's faithfulness extends to all areas, including disciplining His people. He is just as faithful in what He withholds, as in what He gives. He is faithful in sending sorrow, as well as in giving joy. Therefore, the faithfulness of God is a truth to be acknowledged by us, not only when we are at ease, but also when we are in trouble. When we recognize this, we humble ourselves before Him, and accept the fact that we fully deserve His correction. Instead of murmuring or complaining, we thank Him for it just as the Psalmist did when he said, **"I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me" (Psa 119:75).** God is not only faithful in stopping affliction, but in sending it as well. **But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness (Psa 89:33). I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me (Hos 5:15).**

Every member of the Trinity is faithful. In Jam 1:17, God the Father is faithful. In Heb 13:8, The Lord Jesus Christ is faithful, and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Joh 14:16, The Holy Spirit is faithful to indwell the believer, and in 1Co 12:13, He is faithful to teach believers Bible doctrine. Understanding these principles will protect us from worry because to be worried and concerned indicates rejection of this divine attribute. Since He does not change, He who has cared for His child through all the years will not forsake that child in old age. He who has heard your prayers in the past will not refuse to supply your need in the present. Therefore, we arrive at a very important principle: God is greatly honored when, under testing for blessing or chastening, we continue to have the right thoughts towards Him and recognize His divine attributes in action. The sooner we trust his faithfulness toward us in all our affairs, being fully persuaded and convinced of His love for us, the sooner we will find true satisfaction in life.

11

God's Faithfulness in Action

Throughout the Bible, there is case after case of the faithfulness of God in action. The Word of God is filled with real-life stories of those who forsook God, but were never forsaken by Him. For example, Abraham, the father of our faith. In Gen 12:13-19 he willfully lied to deceive the Pharaoh of Egypt and protect his own life. Abraham's wife, Sarah, was very beautiful and Abraham was afraid that the king would kill him to take Sarah for himself.

**[Abraham said to Sarah,] "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you." It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abraham well for her sake, and gave him sheep, oxen, donkeys, male and female servants, and female donkeys and camels. But, the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Then Pharaoh called for Abraham and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go."
(Gen 12:13-19)**

The point behind this story is that Abraham willfully lied, yet God was still faithful to him. There is Abraham's son Isaac, who failed to learn from his father's mistakes, failed to be faithful to God, and also committed the same sin that his father Abraham had. In fear of losing his life, he willfully lied and told the men of Gerar that Rebekah was not his wife, but his sister.

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. The Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because

Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "my wife," thinking, "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful." It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'I might die on account of her.'" Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death." (Gen 26:1-13)

Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; the Lord blessed him, and he became very wealthy. Once again, the Lord was faithful! Isaac had a son named Jacob, and he is a perfect example of God's faithfulness to sinners. In Gen 25:31-33, being naturally crafty and sly, Jacob stole the birthright from his older brother Esau. Later, in Gen 27:18-29, we have a record of his master deception of his father Isaac.

Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die." Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.' "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death." Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. "Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob. Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said,

"Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." So he said, "Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son." So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed; Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine; May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you." Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing." Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept. (Gen 27:1-38)

"Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Gen 18:18-19)

Think of it, after all this deception and faithlessness, God was still faithful to Jacob. In fact, God identifies Himself with these three men many times, as in Exo 3:6 **He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."** Not only did Jacob sin willfully, but also skillfully planned it. The surprising truth is that the Lord changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means "a prince with God." So although Jacob reaped the result of his own negative decisions, and he

was disciplined by God, in Heb 11:21 he was called a man of doctrine.

In Exo 2:12 we see Moses willfully killing a man with his bare hands. Yes, a born-again believer committed murder, yet God's faithfulness never wavered. Moses made excuses to the Lord in Exo 3:11 when he was literally complaining that he was not fit to be used by the Lord. Continuing, in Exodus 4:10, **"Moses said to the Lord, 'Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.'"** He made excuses to God by claiming lack of eloquence. He even asked the Lord to send someone else. Nevertheless, in spite of all his failures, the Lord was still faithful to him.

We can also look at the life of Gideon, a man troubled with fear. The Lord called him to perform a certain task and, as was his habit, he began to make excuses **"I can't go because the Lord has forsaken Israel (Jud 6:13). I am not fit for the job" (Jud 6:13, 15)**. Then, in Judges 8:24-27, he foolishly made a golden ephod, which led to idol worship and became **"a snare to Israel."** However, in spite of all this, and much more, the Lord was faithful to him.

The book of Judges also records the life of Samson who was separated for service to the Lord as a Nazarite; yet in Jud 14:1-3, he continued to associate with evil people, mostly depraved women. Although he was very spiritual at times (Jud 13:25; Jud 15:14), he was under the power of carnal lust. He had a deep desire for prostitutes, and especially for a woman named Delilah whom he foolishly allowed to betray him to his enemies. According to Jud 15:4 he was childish in his plans, yet courageous in battle. He was mighty in physical strength, yet weak in resisting temptation. However, in Jud 16:28, at the end of his life, he called upon the Lord for strength once again, and as always the Lord was faithful.

God's faithfulness is displayed throughout the Scriptures. In fact, years could be spent studying God's faithfulness to David alone. In 1Sa 21:1-10, he willfully sinned and told a lie with the result of that lie being the destruction of the entire city of Nob. Later, he faked madness to convince the enemy that he was crazy, and as a result, hundreds more died. In 1Sa 2:11-18 thousands were killed in battle because of David's feigned insanity in the Philistine city of Gath. After that he failed in his responsibility as a king and a general when, in 2Sa 11:1 he should have led his troops in battle, but instead, stayed home in Jerusalem. As a result, there was disaster not only on the battlefield, but also in Jerusalem with a woman named Bathsheba. While in Jerusalem, David fell into sins that would shock many people today. He committed adultery, he got a man drunk, he ordered a murder, and he willfully lied. In 2Sa 6:1-13 he did not honor the Word of God and purposely disobeyed God's command concerning the Ark of the Covenant, with the result that more men were killed. In 1Ch 21 David not only rejected the promises of God, but also questioned God. In fact, Joab his chief of staff, warned him about his unbelief, but he refused to listen. As a result, 70,000 people died. Later he failed in the principle of forgiving one's enemies after the rebellion of his son Absalom. Here was David who was more oriented to grace than anyone else of his time, but he failed to use that grace in regard to someone he loved dearly. Even after all this the Lord was still

faithful to David, calling him “a man after My heart,” (Act 13:22).

David’s son, Solomon, who was born from Bathsheba, the woman whose husband David murdered, lived an excessively luxurious lifestyle according to 1Ki 4. He married many ungodly women, lived in excessive sensuality, and even sanctioned idolatry. However, regardless of his sins, the Lord was always faithful to him. After a lifetime of self-indulgence, frustration, and failure, Solomon finally realized that the only One whose faithfulness he could trust was God, as he noted in Ecc 12:13-14.

In 1Ki 19 Elijah had just won a tremendous victory, but then ran scared from the threat of a woman, Queen Jezebel. He sat under a tree and complained to the Lord that he wanted to die. Still the most important part of his life for us to remember is that after seeing his cowardice and depression, the Lord remained faithful to him.

We also have the story of Jonah, the reluctant missionary who kept running away from the Lord. He was disappointed at the success of his own ministry because he hated the Ninevites, the people to whom God had sent him to warn of their impending judgment. When they did repent, Jonah’s hatred of them made him very angry. However, in the fourth chapter of the book of Jonah, the Lord remained faithful to him and taught him a superb lesson in divine love.

In addition to all of the previous examples, we can also read of Peter and his denial of the Lord; of Lot and his greed; of Sarah and her rejection of God’s promise, and so many others throughout the Word of God. For what reason does God the Holy Spirit choose to mention the failures of all these believers in the written Word? It is to illustrate that we cannot doubt nor deny the faithfulness of God toward those who fail!

All verses are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, unless otherwise noted.
Corrected translations by Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin are marked with an asterisk (*).