

July - September 2012

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Know Who You Are!

- Know who you are
- Choose Life
- Salt of the Earth
- Be Holy

“Knowledge is Power”

An old saying which means so much to so many - an inspiring line, terse, easy to recall - undoubtedly everyone’s aspiration to have and to hold. And one will find it helpful to inculcate it deeply in his mind if he wants to make something out of himself.

Today, except for “specialized” studies, all other knowledge and information are easily within everyone’s reach; simply google it, and the information appears immediately on the screen. However, knowledge acquired through informal sources may not enable you to get conferred with “impressive letters” after your name; but it is still an effective tool to expand one’s chances for better opportunities. And there is just a surplus of information floating around to fill your minds with and counter “ignorance”.

Knowledge explosion is not new; long time ago God declared: “... many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Daniel 12:4) Today, it’s unpopular for anyone to claim he has less information now than what he had several years back. Yet, even with so much knowledge and information, man’s problem stays the same. Human survival and insecurity are always at the center of it. Much as we hoped that mankind’s giant leap towards becoming fully informed will result in peace, happiness, equality and prosperity for all -- it appears it did not. The ills that plagued society continue to climb steadily towards irrepressible levels.

Something must be lacking with what mankind already knew; thus God, by another prophet said: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...” (Hosea 4:6)

What kind of knowledge is God referring to that mankind is not only found lacking, but has rejected it as well, thereby making him open to destruction? Paul wrote what sounded like a sweeping indictment against the learned of this world: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which maybe known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him a God or give thanks, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:18-23) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (1 Corinthians. 3:19)

Knowing, recognizing and conceding to the true God - the God of creation – the God of your Bible - will lead us to understand the most important knowledge that we need to have and to hold. As our Creator (Gen. 1:26), He is the only One who can tell us who we are, what will become of us, and why we are here on earth. It is the only knowledge that will make us understand the mysteries of life. Knowledge truly is power if it is a direct revelation from the Almighty God. The article on page 3 of this publication will enlighten you more on the subject. Don’t miss it.

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Know Who You Are!

By Winston Co

Most Bible students know that Jesus is the Immanuel - God in the flesh; that the same Jesus divested Himself of His divinity and humbled Himself as a man by being born of a woman (Gal.4:4; Mat. 1:21). The apostle Paul made a more profound disclosure: "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:5-7). Hebrews 2:17 has this to say: "Therefore in all things it behooved him to be made like His brothers, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of His people."

Having now an idea of who Jesus really is, have you ever wondered what He was like as a son of man? Is it not interesting to know how the 'God in the flesh' lived as a growing up boy? Have you pondered upon what was going on in His mind during those adolescent years? Have you ever surmised what the driving force was behind His earthly life? Can you imagine and marvel at the depth of His wisdom? And the most important question one will probably get excited to ask is: What is it like to be Jesus as the Christ ?

We might be familiar about the last three and a half years of Jesus' life; what He did and the reason why He did it. We believe Jesus is truly the Son of God, the Creator who came to die for and redeem humanity

**Your attitude
should be
the same
as that of
Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 2:5

from the penalty of sin so that mankind may have access to eternal life.

Yet, we know very little about what was in His mind and how He thinks. Nonetheless, Paul exhorted those who sincerely desire to become followers of Jesus to imbibe and adopt the mental disposition of the Savior (Philippians 2:5). In this article we will endeavor to learn the extraordinary insight into the mind and thoughts of Jesus, and hopefully the wisdom of Paul's counsel and exhortation will find fulfillment in each one of us.

heavenly things?" (John 3:12) When Jesus Christ was on earth, He vividly remembers His pre-mortal life as the Son of God in the magnificent presence of His Father. He understood and was particularly aware of all the details about His heavenly life. Not only that, He was also very much conscious about His earthly mission. He knew who and what He is, and what His destiny would be--as the Savior and Redeemer of Mankind.

The Knowledge of Personal Experience

There is an interesting account about Jesus in Luke 2:21-52. It is very intriguing how Jesus expressed and revealed

the Father. He and the Father think alike, and they share a common purpose and understanding. They are in complete unity and accord. Thus, Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" John 5:19. Jesus remembers and recalls the time He spent with the Father. In John 1:18, Jesus said No one has ever seen God, but the One and Only who is at the Father's side, has made him known." Jesus is fully aware of His former heavenly life and His divinity.

Jesus declares that He is always at His Father's side; sees what the Father does; did nothing of His own free will; enjoys a trusting relationship with the Father; imitates the Father in every way and receives His Mission from the Father. These are fully explained by Jesus in John 5:19-20, notice:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel; and in verse 36 He said: But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father

“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

Knowledge is Power

Knowledge is the power that enables people to do great things. The most important knowledge one can possibly have is the knowledge of one's self. Knowing one's personal ability, capability, strength, weakness, mission, vision and purpose in life is perhaps the most powerful knowledge anyone can possess. Complete awareness of one's destiny can make one better and gives that person a better chance in achieving great and marvelous things.

Jesus brought with Him great knowledge of the heavenly things. He said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of

John 3:12

spiritual truths and wisdom beyond the physical realm. He knew exactly who He was even at a young age. Thus, He conducted His earthly life according to that knowledge.

Jesus revealed that He knows God the Father intimately. He has a personal relationship with the Father. He and the Father think as one and are in complete unity. Therefore, Jesus remembers, recalls and is aware of His heavenly life. In spite of being in human form and born of a woman, He was aware of His divinity. He communicates and gets instructions directly from



John 10:34-35

Jesus declares saying: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken..."

hath sent me." Other statements of Jesus confirming His intimacy with the God the Father can be found in the following passages: John 7:16, 28-29), John 8:56-58, John 12:44-50 and John 17.

Jesus revealed that He knew God the Father intimately and enjoyed a deep and affectionate relationship with Him.

Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..." Christians must endeavor to look into the mind and thoughts of Jesus, the mind that everyone must strive to imitate (1 Corinthians 2 and Philippians 2:1-10).

Born to be God's Children

If you know your destiny and the reason God created you, would that knowledge change your life? If you have the mind of Christ and understand heavenly things would that change your attitude? If you know what you are to become, would that empower you to do what is right and necessary to fulfill God's will?

In John 10:34-35 Jesus declares saying: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken..." In these two verses Jesus reveals the greatest truth to mankind and the greatest knowledge mankind will ever know. Yes, Jesus plainly said that we are the children of God.

We have the greatest knowledge in the world! We know who we are and what we are going to become. We

know that we are CHILDREN OF GOD. The Apostle John wrote: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

And again Paul insightfully wrote in Romans 8:28-30: "and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." We are destined to be glorified with His Son Jesus Christ and we shall be like Christ. Further, Paul added in Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit

himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ..."

This knowledge may not be available to everyone as Jesus told His followers this: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." (Luke 10:23-24).

To everyone who happens to get hold of this publication and study the contents therein, you have the chance to be among those who are privileged to know your destiny. What you will do with this knowledge will have great impact in the way you live. Like Christ, you now know your destiny and the purpose of your being here on earth. You already know what will become of you. Yes, we are destined to become children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. This knowledge should drive us in the same manner it drives Jesus and the Apostles in fulfilling God's plan and purpose for all of us. **AG**

“Choose Life”

By Eleno S. Mellomida

The scene was quiet, tranquil, relaxing - compounded with the soothing freshness of countryside crispness. Trees of all varieties flourish bountifully, almost all bearing edible fruits. Multicolored flowers bloomed on all sides, amply nourished by the endless flow of water from the rivers. All sorts of aquatic life thrive lavishly in the crystal clear waters of the river; while gold and other precious stones glitter in its surroundings. This was the place God gave the first man and woman as residence. (Gen.1:11-25; Gen.2:8-15)

The chat leading to the Fall

With all the beauty and purity of their habitation, there was nothing anyone could probably ask for anymore; ease, comfort and convenience were

everywhere for the couple to relish and appreciate. That was until the unexpected happen; Satan, the *nacash* – the whispering one - appeared on the scene; refuting and contradicting with ‘tongue-in-cheek’ arguments God’s original instruction to the first man and woman. It is puzzling to figure out how the serpent sneaked his way through and made presentations to Eve. What was even more surprising is God’s apparent non-interference in the dialogue that resulted in mankind’s being cut off from Him. Was God nonchalantly taking this incident for granted when He knew this episode will decide the fate of humanity?

Genesis 3:1-5 narrated the exchange of dialogue between Eve and the serpent. The serpent was subtle and cunning – very good in justification and clever in argumentations. We don’t

know how much time elapsed before the serpent finally convinced Eve. But for sure, the couple were given enough instructions by God why they were barred from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:7)

No doubt considerable time was used up before Eve and Adam finally partook of the forbidden fruit. Thus, there was enough time for God to intervene. But where was God? Did God, after putting them in the garden, turned His back and leave Adam and Eve alone to do their own thing?

The Human Level

As parents, how excited were you upon the ‘arrival’ of your first child? Would you not, as parents, from time to time keep an eye on your child? Aren’t fathers so eager to rush home from work to watch and caress his first son with his loving arms? Where did we learn this loving care? Scripture after scripture tells us that God is the embodiment of love.

(1 John 4:8) It is His character, virtue, attribute, way of life, and irreversible nature. This love (*agapao* in the *greek*) is present in the psyche of man regardless of one's belief and status. Jesus said even sinners *love* those who *love* them, Luke 6:33. The same word is used when Jesus said "*love your enemies*". The human proclivity to love and care was infused by God as part of man's trait; after all man is made after His own image and likeness. (Gen. 1:26)

Now Adam and Eve were God's first creation that looks exactly like Him. Undoubtedly, God loved them so much. You will notice that when God created everything before creating man, all He had to say about it was "good". (Gen. 1:10, 13, 18, 21, 25) It was not until God made a summary of all His creation that He used the superlative expression "very good". (Gen. 1:31) It kind of sustained the impression that something very special was added to the creation - the making of man after His own image and likeness; the last act God did before resting on the seventh day.

" Except God, there was no one within the garden that was exempted from Adam's power to subdue, rule and have dominion over" .

The Freedom to Choose

The truth is, in the beginning God already endowed humanity with the "freedom to choose" - the capability to make independent choices; and to make decisions out of those choices. This was already infused within the human psyche when God created him. Adam was given wide latitude to "dress and to keep" the garden. It was theirs to manage and maintain. The first exercise of choice that God granted Adam was the prerogative to name all the animals. Genesis 2:19 says: " And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every animal of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature - that was its name. And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field."

God did not make a mistake in granting man this freedom. Why? Long, long time ago, He also endowed Lucifer with the same independent mind, and granted him that freedom. Yet Lucifer, whom God calls *full of wisdom and perfect in beauty* (Ezekiel 28:12), opted to defy and rebel against Him. God's experience with Lucifer would have been good enough not to commit the same mistake again. Yet, He granted the same to Adam and Eve, even with knowledge that a wrong choice on their part will definitely produce the same result. Obviously God was consistent with His principle -

to endow man the capacity to exercise choices, and make decisions based on those choices.

Much as God would prefer that we chose the way to life, He never imposed nor forced anyone to adopt His preferences. Here's what He told Israel: Today I offer you the choice of life and death, good or evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I give you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by conforming to His ways and by keeping his commandments statutes and laws, then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to occupy. (Deut. 30:15-16)

The Power of Adam

Do you suppose God left Adam and Eve powerless to defend themselves against any threat that comes their way while they were in the garden? Do you know that Adam, by choice, at that very instant, could easily drive Satan away from their habitation? Certainly he can! God had already empowered Adam to thwart any danger, threat or attempt to remove him from the priceless property given to him. What kind of power did God gave Adam?

Listen: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and **let them have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and **over all the earth**, and over **every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth**. And

God blessed them, and God said unto them; Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue it: and have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over **every living thing that moves upon the earth.** And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to **every beast of the earth**, and to every fowl of the air, and to **everything that creeps upon the earth**, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. (Genesis 1:26-30)

Adam's scope of responsibility covers everything in the garden. Except God, there was no one within the garden that was exempted from his **power to subdue, rule and have dominion over.** That includes all the beast of the earth; and that includes the subtle beast mentioned in Genesis 3:1 - regardless of how crafty, subtle, wily and cunning the beast was. And that beast was Satan the Devil taking the form of a serpent.

Apparently, the devil successfully deceived Eve because Adam did not use the power God gave to him. If he submitted, and abide by God's instruction faithfully, he could have easily driven Satan away from the property which was his to "dress and to keep it" in the first place.

James, the half-brother of Christ, is familiar with the

procedure on how to drive Satan away. Notice: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7) The condition to acquire the power to drive Satan away is clear. One cannot just resist the devil without completely submitting to God first. Adam listened to Eve, which made him indirectly subject to Satan. (Gen. 3:17). He could have driven the adversary away by submitting to God's rule above anyone else.

The Only Choice

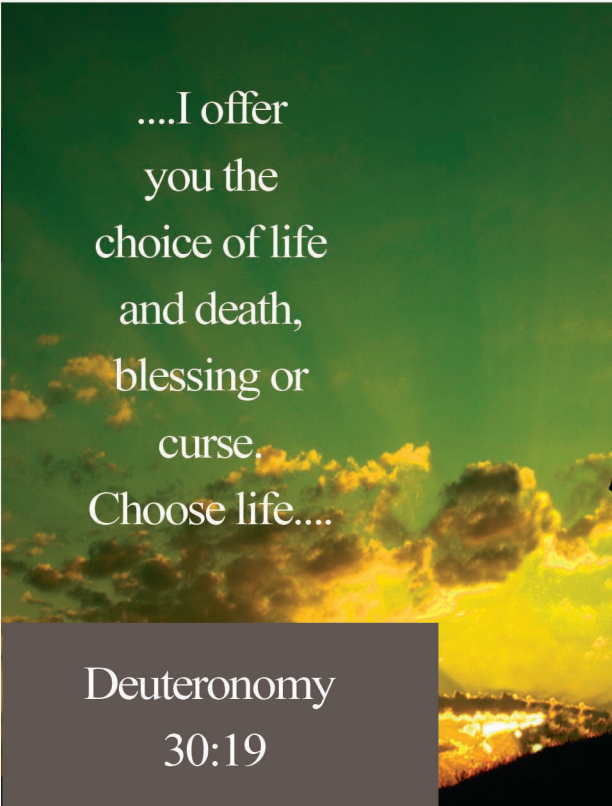
Adam did not use his freedom to choose wisely, and God allowed it. It was not one of God's delightful moments. But then God wants obedience that comes freely from a willing heart, not by compulsion, or coercion or even under duress. He wants us to decide on the basis of our conviction that His ways are just, right, rewarding; and it is the only way to fulfill His divine purpose in creating us. And He is not leaving us ignorant of His ways; He proclaimed all of it in His words - the Bible.

From the time of Adam up to this very day, mankind has made choices on whom to believe, to worship and to pay homage to. And most of those choices are not in agreement with God's will. Yet God was, and still is forbearing because He is not willing that humanity should perish, but for everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9); and to start worshipping the true God who declared: "I am the Lord and there is no other; Besides Me there is no

God...that men may know from the rising of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord and there is no other..." (Isaiah 45:5-7)

The same God presented us with clear options: "I summon heaven and earth to witness against you this day; I offer you the choice of **life** and **death**, blessing or curse. Choose life and then you and your descendants will live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Are you willing to pick out God's preferred choice? This may sound like a "worn out" passage but it cannot be taken for granted; it is the first step in choosing life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but shall have eternal life." (John 3:16) **Choose life now** - it's the best choice. **AG**



...I offer
you the
choice of life
and death,
blessing or
curse.
Choose life....

Deuteronomy
30:19



SALT OF THE EARTH

By William Co

....You are the salt to the world. And if salt becomes tasteless, how is its saltiness to be restored ?....

Do you know that in this world we can get along with out a lot of things? We can get along without cakes and ice cream. We probably could remove all meats from our diets; we could do alright without sugar and spices. Worse comes to worst, except for our basic staple, we can do without all other food items and ingredients in our table; but there's one item you cannot do without, salt. Salt is as important as the water we drink and the air we breathe. Both humans and animals need salt in their daily diets in order to survive.

Nowadays, almost everyone knew how salt is being processed. It is the simplest "technology" that anyone can

easily copy and start up his own "salty" business. But what we are not fully aware of is how people in the olden times value the importance of salt. Perhaps, a little background on salt will help us appreciate this item which entails the smallest allocation in our marketing budget.

Salarium – Salt Money

In ancient times, salt was so valuable that it was used in lieu of money. It might interest you to know that our modern word "salary" is derived from the word salt. The Latin word salarium simply means "Salt Money". The reader may find this historical fact amusing; but believe it or not, the Roman soldiers, who had to risked life and limb to protect the republic

of Rome, were paid, not in Silver or Gold Coins, but in salt. In the same way, Greek aristocrats had a custom of buying slaves with salt. If the slave did not meet the owner's expectation, that slave "was not worth his salt". Hence the expression, "He is not worth his salt".

Jesus Christ said something very interesting about salt in Matthew 5:13. He said, "You are the salt to the world. And if salt becomes tasteless, how is its saltiness to be restored? It is now good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden underfoot."

On this occasion, Jesus was not addressing the public at large, but privately to His own disciples. And presumably,

there were just few of them. Notice: "When He saw the crowds, He went up the hill. There He took His seat, and when His disciples had gathered around Him, He began to address them." (Mat. 5:1)

So what are the basic properties of salt that has immediate bearing and connection with Jesus' followers?

Salt Purifies

One important characteristic of salt that we have to appreciate is that salt purifies. Salt promotes healing and removes impurities. Salt can remove impurities in water. Notice 2 Kings 2:19-22 "Now the leaders of the town of Jericho visited Elisha. "We have a problem my lord", they told him. "This town is beautiful and the surroundings are natural as you can see. But the water is bad, and the land is unproductive." Elisha said, "Bring me a new bowl with salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring that supplied the town and threw the salt into it. And he said, "This is what the Lord says: I have made this water wholesome. It will no longer cause death or infertility. And sure enough the water has remained wholesome ever since."

This incident may not, in actuality, work for us today. The account is more of a miraculous incident rather than recommending a scientific formula. But then, why did Elijah use salt instead of other "purifying" agents? Salt, as it is,

disinfects, and in a way purifies. Jesus expected His followers to become the "salt of the earth".

What are Christians supposed to purify? Jesus said something interesting in Mark 9:50: "For everyone will be purified with fire. Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other." We are commanded by our Savior to 'salt' ourselves.

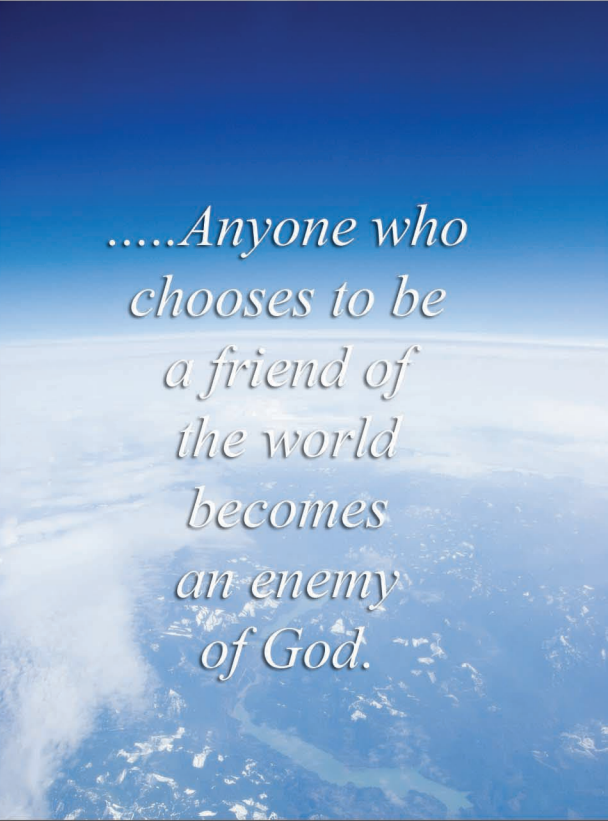
However, there are circumstances when salt loses its saltiness. And for salt to become tasteless by and of itself is quite impossible. It can only happen when salt is contaminated with other minerals, causing a weakness in flavor or a bland and unpleasant taste. The contaminants will render the salt tasteless.

Jesus reminded His followers that losing one's 'saltiness' is something one has to carefully guard against. How will this happen? How can a true Christian, who is expected to become the "salt of the earth", lose his or her saltiness? What are the "contaminants" that will transform them into a "tasteless" salt?

The following passages will answer: "Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you have no love for the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this

evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever." (1 John 2:15-17) James added: You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God." (James 4:4)

Going with the flow; unbridled entanglement with this world's ways; endless and uncontrollable pursuit of the things that satisfy only the five senses; all these will drive one to compromise with God's ways; and all these will definitely result in losing one's saltiness.



*.....Anyone who
chooses to be
a friend of
the world
becomes
an enemy
of God.*

James 4 : 4

Jesus warned: You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless." (Mat. 5:13)

That's why our Lord commanded us to salt ourselves, and Paul tells us this: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7:1.

Once we strive to become pure, holy and pleasing to God, a true Christian will certainly stand out as the "salt of the earth"; a beacon of godliness in a world swayed under the influence of God's adversary. (2 Cor. 4:4)

Salt Influences Flavor

Just as salt brings out the natural flavor in food, true Christians must bring out, and be able to show those within our sphere of influence what real Christianity is all about through our actions. Salt becomes useful only when it is put to good use. By itself it is just salt. It has all the properties but it is totally useless until put to work.

Here's Paul's instruction to Timothy: "Be an example to all believers in what you teach in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Until I get there focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them. Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecies spoken to you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see

your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right, and God will save you and those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

Peter wrote: Beloved, keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the things which they slander you as evildoers, they may, because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)

Salt Preserves

Just as salt preserves, true believers of Christ should act as a preservatives. There were no freezers in Jesus' day. The only way to preserve food was to "salt it away" to prevent the food from getting spoiled. True Christians, like salt, need to preserve the truth of the gospel; the gospel that provides hope for all mankind to have a chance for salvation--physically and spiritually.

Jesus said: And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. (Mat. 24:14) This is the mission Christ gave to the "salt of the earth" -- His followers. (Mark 16:15-16) Thus, the 'salt of

the earth' must maintain their saltiness and continue as live instruments in preaching the gospel of salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16) This gospel which Jesus preached at the start of His ministry is the most important message that most Christian communities have not proclaimed it for ages.

Salt properties = Christian qualities

No doubt, in all probability there are several properties and uses of salt. Yet there are three (3) basic characteristics in salt that are considered having immediate relevance to true Christianity. These are: Salt purifies, salt influences flavor and salt preserves. And to truly represent the properties of salt, Jesus expects His believers to strive to abstain from worldly ways; overcome and show others how it is to be a true follower of Christ; and preserve and proclaim the true gospel which Jesus Himself preach during His ministry. And when He comes, He can say with confidence that you are indeed the "salt of the earth". **AG**



*....Salt purifies,
Salt influences
flavor and
Salt preserves.*

BE HOLY

By Ferdie Padilla

When we read the book of Leviticus, we will come across the phrase “be holy”. Seemingly this is more than a statement but in itself is a command from God. We may find it intriguing if it is really possible for us to be holy given our humanity and the tendency of human nature to do evil. How is it possible to be holy and live a holy life? What is holy to you? Is it not getting angry or being grouchy? How does God define holiness? There are a lot of places where the phrase “be holy” is found. For this article, we will go through some of them and compare them; please do take note of the context of each.

Places Where “Be Holy” Is Found

One instance where the phrase is found is in Leviticus 11:44 - 45 (NIV), “I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.” The context of these passages relates to the food laws that God gave to us. The word holy

in Hebrew is “qadosh” which means “sacred (ceremonially or morally)...”, according to Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, 3rd edition. In the passages that we have just read, holy is related to being clean or consecrated to God by avoiding unclean meats or food. So that’s one instance where being holy or holiness is described in the Bible. And then there’s this passage found in Leviticus 19:1 - 4 (NIV) “The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. “Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths [plural]. I am the LORD your God. “Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for you. I am the LORD your God.” Then reading thru the entire 19th and 20th chapter of Leviticus, we will find that many of the things mentioned here relate to the Ten Commandments. Some other statutes and ordinances were also mentioned like not seeking out mediums or spiritists or not tattooing our bodies. But generally speaking, many of these things are details of the Ten

Commandments. Some verses relate to the 7th commandment, some to the commandment against stealing. Here is another instance on being holy – observing the Ten Commandments, ordinances and statutes of God. Then we read in Leviticus 20:26 (NIV) You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” God commanded the ancient Israelites to be holy because He was setting them apart from the rest of the nations to be His people. There has to be a reason why God commanded them to do this. Apparently, it is to make a model nation that other peoples can look up to, to show them that the God of Israel is the only true God and none else and to show other peoples how to live life.

These are some of the places from the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament where the phrase “be holy” can be found. One instance is in 1 Peter 1:13 - 16 (NIV), Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children,

*You are to be holy to me because
I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart
from the nations to be my own.
Leviticus 20:26*

do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." The Greek word translated as "holy" is "hagios", which means "sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated): (most) holy (one, thing), saint", Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, 3rd edition. What is interesting in these passages is that it is a direct quotation of Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, most of which we have read earlier. The phrase "be holy" means the same thing in both Old and New Testaments. The bible is consistent on this.

So what can we surmise from what we have read earlier? The "holy" part of the phrase means "sacred (ceremonially or morally, physically pure, morally blameless)" and to be "holy" points to obedience to the laws of God – the food laws (though they involve physical food, but nevertheless are spiritual in nature, as we will see later), the Ten Commandments and everything else that God says we have to do to remain clean


and pure in His sight. If we are able to do this, we would be "set apart" from the rest of the peoples because our lifestyle would be different from them. Holy means separated or sanctified for God's purpose. The word "be" (from the Hebrew hayah) on the other hand, according to Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, 3rd edition, means "to exist, that is, be or become, come to pass..." and in the Greek (ginomai) "to cause to be ("gen" -erate), that is, (reflexively) to become (come into being)....". If we are to conclude our analysis, "be holy" can also be translated as "become holy" which implies a process and a certain amount of time to pass. There was a time we were not holy. There is a starting point. Becoming holy is a requirement by God as we have plainly read in Scriptures.

How Do We Become Holy?

How does a person become holy? It begins with the repentance of a person and his or her baptism. We read in Acts 2:38 - 39 (NIV) "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." Upon receipt of the Holy Spirit, God dwells in that person. That is why it is said in 1 Corinthians 3:16 - 17 (NIV) "16Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." Interestingly enough, the word "sacred" here in verse 17 is the same Greek word used in 1 Peter 1:15-16. Verse 17 is saying we are the holy temple of God! And the warning in the same verse is for every converted Christian to take heed of. That is why there are safeguards for maintaining the holiness of that temple. We have just read some of them. Where God is, that place becomes holy. Proof of this is found in Exodus 3:1-6, the account of the burning bush. God plainly said that the ground Moses was standing on is holy ground (verse 5). When God dwells in a person through His Spirit, that

person becomes “holy” or consecrated to God. And since our bodies are the temple of God, it is necessary to maintain cleanliness of that body by observing the food laws. No unclean meat should ever enter our bodies. Why? Because God, who is holy, is living in us. There are foods He has declared to be unclean because they defile our bodies. We are not just observing the food laws for health reasons nor are the food laws just “physical laws”. There is an even greater reason and it is spiritual in nature. Our bodies are God’s temple and He does not want any unclean thing to ever enter it. If you were in His place, would you want to live in an unclean environment? Of course not! Since we are God’s temple, it is necessary for us to avoid sexual immorality. Since we are God’s temple, we are not to have tattoos on our bodies; it is necessary for us to maintain a healthy mind - free from anger, hatred, deceit, hypocrisy, unforgiving attitudes and pride. God’s Word provides a lot of instructions for us to be holy. Being holy (that is, becoming sacred to God because we obey His laws and because we have the Holy Spirit of God) sets us Christians apart from the rest of the peoples. We no longer do what we used to do along with them. We have now changed. We are already consecrated to God that’s why we are called saints of God. Believe it or not, the word saint in the KJV is translated from the same Greek word that is translated as holy – “hagios”.



*Consecrate yourselves
and be holy, because
I am the LORD your God.*

Leviticus 20:7

Why Become Holy

Why should we become holy? The answer is actually found where the phrase “be holy” is found. Let’s go back to Leviticus 11:44 - 45 (NIV) I Am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.” Why should we be holy? This is our answer - because God is holy. What the passage is saying - since God is holy those who would commune with Him must be holy. We all know that it was God’s intent to live with us for all eternity. We read in Ephesians 1:3 - 6 (NIV), praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of

the world to [take note!] be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” Clearly, the intent of the Father is for us to be adopted as His sons and daughters. But for that to happen, we should “be holy and blameless in His sight”. He only wants to live with us if we are holy, if we have learned to overcome ourselves, our selfishness, our impure thoughts and desires.

Conclusion

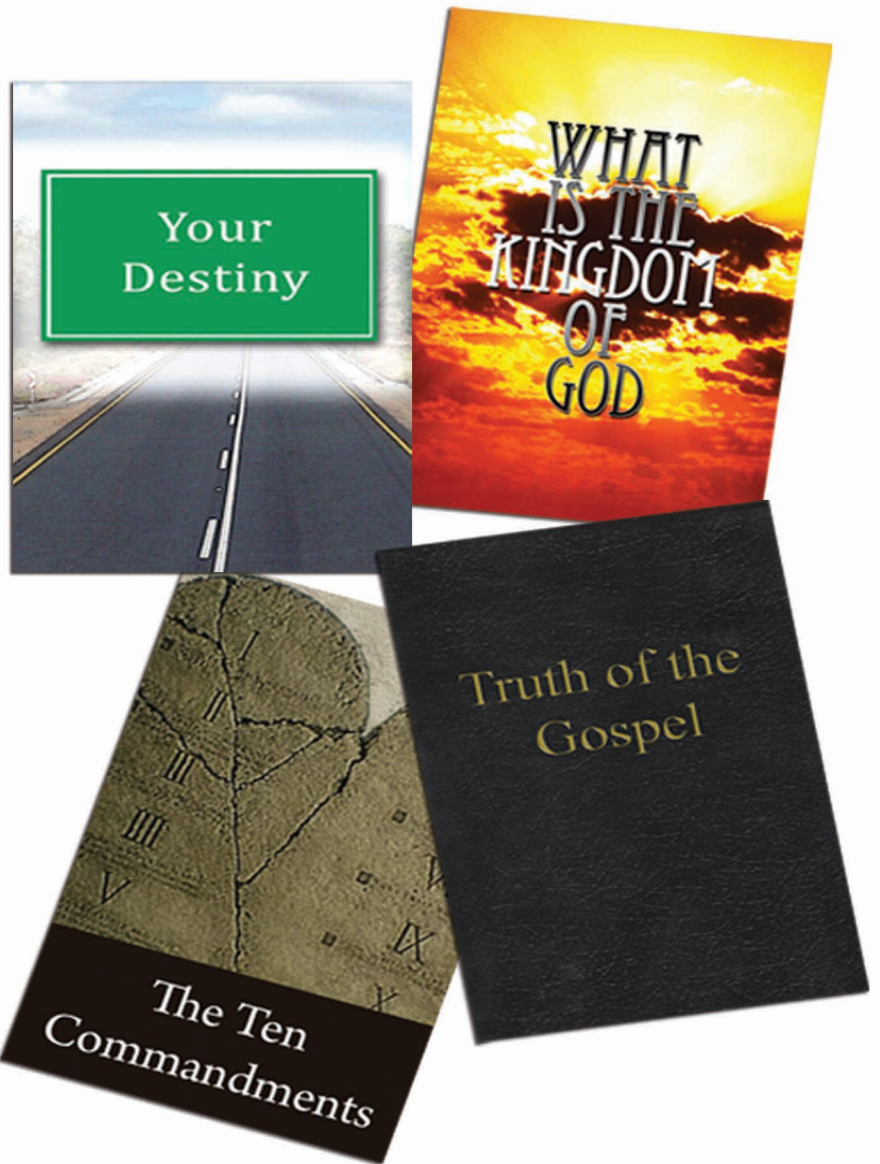
Going back to the question posed earlier – Is it possible to be holy in this lifetime? Is it possible to live a holy life? The answer is yes. But being holy and living a holy life is possible only when God resides in us through His Holy Spirit. It is the sanctifying agent who helps us overcome ourselves. It is only

God who can make men holy because it is only He who can sanctify us through His Holy Spirit. We cannot really make ourselves holy. It is only God who can help us live a holy life. Peter's admonition for us to be holy means that we have to continue to live a holy life. After conversion, we have to maintain the holy life we were called to live, that is, keep our state of sanctification by obedience to God's laws. That is our part - to continue to obey God and His laws.

True, it is difficult to "be holy" but it is a worthy endeavor to "be holy". We all fall short many times. And that is where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ come in. If we earnestly repent of our shortcomings after conversion, God will forgive us and apply the sanctifying sacrifice of His Son so that we become clean in His sight once again. And for this, we should be truly thankful for. **AG**

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

1 Corinthians
3 : 16



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