

# MESSENGER

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April 2019

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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# MESSENGER

## Magazine

Issue No. 9 | April 2019

Christ in His ministry spoke often of “the kingdom of God” – what does this term mean? Is it a feeling? Is it a belief? Is it a governmental rule? How does it relate to the plan of God? And what does this mean for those who follow Him? See what scripture says about this incredibly important subject in “What is the Kingdom of God?” and “Citizens and Sons of God’s Kingdom”!

### Featured Articles

Adding Words to Scripture | 2

What Is the Kingdom of God? | 3

Citizens and Sons of God’s Kingdom | 5

Zeal for Victory | 9

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# ADDING WORDS TO SCRIPTURE

Rod Reynolds

Relying on the King James Bible, many believe 1 John 5:7-8 clearly validates the Trinity doctrine. But does it?

We are warned not to add to God's inspired word (Proverbs 30:5-6). And, of course, deliberately altering the text of a manuscript -- adding words to Scripture, for example -- to change its meaning is fraudulent and dishonest.

The Hebrew "Old Testament" has been preserved among the Jews (Romans 3:1-2), and the Greek "New Testament" preserved among the Greeks. The majority of manuscripts preserving the New Testament were copied in Greek speaking areas of Asia Minor and Europe up to the time of the invention of printing. These form the "Byzantine" text of the Greek New Testament. The Byzantine text is almost identical to the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament (1516), edited by Erasmus, though he did use non-Byzantine sources in a few places. This and subsequent slightly modified versions, came to be called the *Textus Receptus*, from which the King James Version was translated.

There have been many attempts to corrupt and confuse the text of the New Testament over the centuries, represented by corrupted Greek manuscripts from other areas of the world, notably Rome and Alexandria, and poor translations of already corrupted Greek texts, such as the early Latin translation. The Vulgate, influenced by older Latin translations,

was also based on corrupted Greek texts where the Greek was consulted. These corrupt texts are used for many modern English translations. 1 John 5:7-8 is a good example of the lengths to which some have gone to distort the text of the Scriptures.

Words added by some translators and copyists in these verses to make it appear that the New Testament teaches the Trinity doctrine are found in no Greek manuscript before the fifteenth century. In my New King James Bible, the center reference reads: "NU, M [modern eclectic and Majority texts] omit the rest of v. 7 [following '...bear witness'] and through on earth of v. 8, a passage found in Greek in only four or five very late mss." "The only Greek manuscripts in any form which support the words, 'in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one; and there are three that bear witness in earth,' are the Montfortianus of Dublin, copied evidently from the modern Latin Vulgate; the Ravianus, copied from the Complutensian Polyglot; a manuscript at Naples, with the words added in the Margin by a recent hand; Ottobonianus, 298, of the fifteenth century, the Greek of which is a mere translation of the accompanying Latin. All the old versions omit the words. The oldest manuscripts of the Vulgate omit them..." (JFB Commentary).

The words are not part of the Byzantine text. They do not appear in any manuscript preserved by the Greek speaking Church. A.T. Robertson explains how the spurious words

found their way into the *Textus Receptus*.

"Erasmus did not have it in his first edition, but rashly offered to insert it if a single Greek MS. had it and 34 [a manuscript of the sixteenth century] was produced with the insertion, as if made to order. The spurious addition is... (in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth)" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Most scholars today recognize the words are spurious, and many modern translations omit them. The Darby translation for example reads: "For they that bear witness are three: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one."

If the Bible really teaches the Trinity doctrine, why would copyists think it expedient to fraudulently add words to the Bible in an attempt to support it? Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity" (*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 15, "Trinity," p. 54). Continuing from the same source, "Further, exegetes and theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity." The amazing truth of the origins of the Trinity doctrine, and what the Bible really teaches about God's nature, is further discussed in our enlightening article "Origins of the Trinity," available from our website: [cogmessenger.org](http://cogmessenger.org). If you would like for us to send you a printed copy, please write to us.



What is

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Rod Reynolds

**I**s the kingdom of God, as many assume, merely a warm feeling in one's heart, or a vague idea about someday 'going to heaven'? Or is the kingdom of God more real, tangible and powerful than most people have imagined?

John the Baptist preached the message of the kingdom of God (Matthew 3:1-2). The same message of the kingdom of God was preached by Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15). In fact, Jesus said preaching the kingdom of God was a purpose for which he was sent (Luke 4:43). The twelve apostles Jesus trained were also commissioned to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). Paul, who also became an apostle, was at end of his life still testifying of the kingdom of God (Acts 28:23).

But what is the kingdom of God? To most professing Christians the kingdom of God is a familiar term but a vague one, having little concrete meaning. To many the kingdom of God is somehow connected with a warm feeling in your heart, or a vague idea about being in heaven. But what does the Bible itself reveal about the kingdom of God?

It's not surprising that most people have not really understood the concept of the "kingdom of God," because Jesus spoke of it as a "mystery" (Mark 4:11). The Greek term translated "mystery," *μυστήριον* (*mystērion*), generally implied knowledge understood or known only to "the initiated," or a select group. "In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious...but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illuminated by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a 'mystery' is knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed..." (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, W. E. Vine). Actually, in the New Testament, it's both knowledge hidden, and knowledge revealed, to those who are willing to receive it (Luke 18:17; Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26).

Jesus commanded his disciples to "seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). The Bible teaches that the kingdom of God may be inherited (Matthew 5:3, 10; 25:34; cf. Hebrews 6:12).

We see in comparing Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20 that the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably. Matthew, whose gospel was originally intended primarily for a Jewish audience, favored the term kingdom of heaven because the Jews understood the Messiah would be sent from heaven and his authority would derive from hence. The term "kingdom of heaven" occurs often in Jewish writings.

One major deception is that the "kingdom of God" is "in your heart." In other words, it's not a real kingdom, but a "feeling" within one's heart. Yet, the Bible nowhere says the kingdom of God is "in your heart."

This idea has been read into a verse in Luke: "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you'" (Luke 17:20-22).

Note that Jesus was speaking to a group of Pharisees, who were, for the most part, bitterly opposed to Jesus' teachings at the time (Matthew 12:14). Was the "kingdom of God" really in the hearts of those Pharisees, who sought to kill Jesus?

While the Greek word *ἐντός* [*entós*] (Luke 17:21), translated "within" in the KJV and NKJV could be translated "within," it could also be translated "among." It may mean the new dispensation is even now among YOU. The Messiah has come. ...he is now among you. Most

critics at present incline to this latter interpretation" (Barnes' New Testament Notes).

Note that Jesus went on to say by way of explanation to his disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it" (Luke 17:22). Of course, they were seeing "one of the days of the Son of Man" then, because he was among them. But, he went on to discuss how he would be rejected in that generation, but then come again at a later time (Luke 17:23-25).

The kingdom of God was among the Jews of that day, as Jesus himself, the Messiah, was among them. But many among them refused to recognize or acknowledge him, because he had not come in the manner in which they expected the kingdom of God to appear.

Jesus had not come, at that time, to establish his rulership over the earth. Rather, he appeared at that time to offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 9:26-28).

The Bible reveals that the Kingdom of God is not just some vague idea, or warm feeling in the heart, but that it is a literal, powerful, kingdom, destined to rule the world, replacing all the kingdoms, or governments, of mankind on this earth! Beyond that, the kingdom of God rules the entire Universe! (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Although God has supreme authority over all, he has allowed mankind more or less free reign to do as he will under Satan's influence, since the first created humans sinned and rejected God's rule over them (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan and the demons are the spiritual powers who hold sway over the present world as a whole, as God has allowed (Isaiah 14:6, 12-17; John 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; Revelation 12:9). It is a reign of sin and death (Romans 5:12, 14, 17, 21).

However, the Bible reveals that in due time Jesus Christ will return to this earth to depose Satan, and reign as king over the entire earth. The kingdom of God will govern all nations of the earth.

The kingdom of God when it is established on the earth to replace the kingdoms of this world (or age) will include the following features: 1) King; 2) Territory; 3) Subjects; 4) Law.

**Who is the King?** Jesus referred to it as the Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Though divine, a member of the Godhead, Jesus is subject to the will of the Father in heaven (John 5:30). Though the Christ is subject to the Father, he too is a king, and he will personally rule over the kingdom of God on the earth as the Father has willed (Hebrews 1:4-5, 8; Daniel 7:13-14).

**What is the territory?** The kingdom of God is destined to rule the entire earth (Daniel 2:35, 44-45). It will supersede and consume all the kingdoms "under heaven," that is, the entire earth (Daniel 7:27; Revelation 11:15; Zechariah 14:5, 8-9, 16). So while the Kingdom of God certainly rules over heaven, the emphasis as far as the future age is concerned, the age of the Messiah, the time following the return of Jesus Christ, is the earth. Jesus Christ is coming to literally establish the Kingdom of God on earth and to literally rule on the earth as it's King, with his throne and bodily presence in Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:3).

**Who are to be subjects?** Everyone on the earth will be subjects of the kingdom of God under the rule of Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:14; Zechariah 2:10-13).

**What is the law of the kingdom?** The law of the kingdom will be the word of God. That law will include the same commandments that many people have been deceived into believing Jesus came to abolish. But those commandments, including the ten commandments given at Mount Sinai, and ancillary laws, will be the very laws by which Christ will govern mankind (Isaiah 11:3-4; Psalm 119:172; Isaiah 2:1-4; Deuteronomy



30:3-10; Jeremiah 31:31-33). The result will be peace, justice, and universal joy (Psalm 67:1-7; Isaiah 61:7-8).

While flesh and blood human beings living on the earth after the return of Jesus Christ will be subjects of the kingdom of God, flesh and blood cannot inherit a permanent status as sons of God in his kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:50). Converted Christians are placed under the divine authority of the kingdom of God, having a direct relationship with Christ as members of his body, which is the Church (Ephesians 5:30; Colossians 1:13, 18). But we await the full inheritance as sons of God, which shall be received upon the return of Jesus Christ, at the time of the resurrection of the saints (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 50-54; Galatians 4:6-7; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 20:4-6). When one repents in faith, being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit, he has a guarantee of a future inheritance in God's kingdom, as long as he continues faithful (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13-14; Colossians 1:21-23).

Many have been led to believe that when a person dies, he doesn't really die, but continues to live a conscious existence as a "soul." And when "death" occurs the person "goes to heaven," to "be with Jesus," or "goes to hell." Never explained in any meaningful detail is what a person is to do upon "going to heaven." But, this idea is often vaguely associated with the "kingdom of God."

Yet, the Bible teaches that no human being, other than Jesus Christ, has actually ascended to heaven, that is, the "third heaven," where God presently dwells (John 3:13). Of all human beings, presently **only Jesus Christ** has immortality (1 Timothy 6:14-16; see our article "What Is Death?").

As referenced earlier, receiving the reward of the kingdom of God is associated with the resurrection, in conjunction with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. The saints are to reign on the earth with Christ in his kingdom, not in heaven (Daniel 7:27; Revelation 2:26-27; 5:10).

What then did Jesus mean when he said of those persecuted for his sake, "for great is your reward in heaven"? (Matthew 5:12). Peter explains that the reward of the saints is "reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4). When Christ returns, he will bring his reward with him, "to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12; cf. Isaiah 40:10; 62:11).

Paul looked forward to receiving his "crown" on "that day," the day of his (the Lord's) appearing (2 Timothy 4:8; cf. Luke 19:11-26; Revelation 20:4-6).

It is at that time that the saints will be made immortal sons of God in his eternal kingdom (Daniel 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; Matthew 19:29; Hebrews 9:15; Revelation 2:11; 21:7).

Finally, when all enemies have been destroyed, including death itself, which shall have no power over those who remain, the

kingdom will be delivered up to Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 20:14-15). God the Father will come down to the earth to receive the kingdom. He and Christ will dwell in the midst of their kingdom, in the New Jerusalem, among those who have been granted salvation (Revelation 21:1-3, 10-12, 22-27; 22:1-5).

The children of God, sons in his kingdom, will inherit "all things" (Revelation 21:7). God will share with his immortal, divine family, sons made in his likeness, bearing his nature, the entire creation (1 Corinthians 15:48-49; 2 Peter 1:4). God will "be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The Kingdom of God is the eternal reward of every Christian who remains faithful to the end.

## MATTHEW 6:25-34 | TLV



*"So I say to you, do not worry about your life—what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing?"*

*"Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your Father in heaven feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. Now if in this way God clothes the grass—which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow—will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"*

*"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the pagans eagerly pursue all these things; yet your Father in heaven knows that you need all these. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*



**T**he benefits and blessings in store for citizens and sons of the kingdom of God are beyond what most people have ever dreamed of or imagined! Yet this potential is real, and is available to you now! But what does it mean to be such a "citizen," or a "son" of God (in a generic sense, without regard to sex)? And how may this be achieved?

In the Bible, a number of metaphors are used to illustrate and explain how God relates to us as human beings, his creatures. The metaphors include agricultural activities, such as planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, winnowing, and the produce of such activities, such as fruits of the vine, the field, and of trees, firstfruits and fruits of the later harvest. There are metaphors of family relationships, as Father and sons, or children, husband and wife. Also, metaphors of citizenship, alien residents, and foreigners.

The Bible has a great deal to say about how we can enter into a relationship with God as "citizens" of his eternal kingdom, and "sons" in his divine family. But much of what it says has been misunderstood, or at best, poorly understood, by many.

Regardless of your race, nationality, or social status, you can become a full citizen of the kingdom of God, and be counted as a son of God. Learning more about what the Bible teaches us about our potential relationship to God as citizens of his kingdom, and sons, or children of his household, can help us to know God better, relate to him on a more personal level, and become or remain firmly committed to him.

Some, perhaps quite a number, even among those who've entered into a committed relationship with God, have had the mistaken idea that when one repents of sin, is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit, he has "applied," in a sense, to become a citizen of God's kingdom, and a member of his household. Those who repent in faith and are baptized, by this reckoning, are not really citizens of the kingdom and children of God, but are only "applicants."

As we will see, however, that notion, that at baptism we "apply" to become citizens of the kingdom and members of the household of God, is quite mistaken and entirely misleading. It is not at all what the Scriptures teach.

What the Scriptures actually teach about this ought to be far more encouraging, and ought to help reveal to our minds the deep intimacy with which God views our relationship to him.

First we need to understand that in one sense, every human being is considered by him to be one of his children.

Paul said to a crowd of Athenians:

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For **we are also His offspring**.' Therefore, since **we are the offspring of God**, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:24-29).

So we see here that we are -- every human being included -- the "offspring" of God, in a sense, his children. God is not indifferent to his children. Jesus said, "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7).

As God takes notice of sparrows, surely he is not less concerned about human beings made in his image (Genesis 1:27).

# CITIZENS AND SONS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Rod Reynolds

- SALVATION OPEN TO ALL -

Jesus was sent to pay for the sins of the whole of mankind, that **everyone** might have an opportunity for salvation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

As God's created beings, his offspring, his children in a sense, created in the likeness of God in certain respects, all human beings have the potential for salvation. And God will make salvation attainable for every human being who is willing to meet his terms for salvation, that is, eternal life in his kingdom.

- CUT OFF FROM GOD -

Human beings, however, beginning with Adam, have rejected God, and as a result most have been cut off from God, in a spiritual sense. Their status relative to God, for the most part, has been one of **aliens**, NOT citizens, of his kingdom, and without a meaningful relationship with him.

Paul expressed the condition of unregenerate Gentiles in his letter to the Ephesians. Ephesus was a Greek city, and most of the converts in Ephesus at the time Paul wrote his letter were Gentiles. Note what Paul said to them:

"And you He made alive, **who were dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, just as the others.

.....

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Christ, **being aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**" (Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-12).

Note that they had been "dead" in their trespasses, that is, they were under the penalty of death due to their sins (Romans 6:23). They were following the way of Satan. They were children of wrath. They were aliens, strangers, without God in the world.

But notice in Ephesians 2:3, that the Gentiles were "**among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh**, fulfilling the



desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

In other words, not only Gentiles, but Israelites, too, had walked after the lusts of the flesh, and had become children of wrath.

The nation of Israel had been chosen by God out of all the nations of the earth to enter into a covenant relationship with him. If they kept the covenant, God told them:

"Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant**, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation**" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Having entered into the covenant with God, the children of Israel were now considered his sons, in a special way. They were not cut off from God as the rest of the world was. Under the covenant relationship they were especially blessed of God. He dealt with them in a direct way. He was to be their God, as opposed to false gods worshiped by all other nations on earth.

Israel as a whole was viewed as God's son, so to speak. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1).

Israel, though it entered into a special covenant relationship with God (Exodus 19:7-8), was a carnal nation. Most of the people of Israel, though they had many opportunities to repent, did not do so. They continued to walk after the false gods of the nations. They did not keep the covenant.

Therefore God rejected them, sent them back into captivity, and hid his face from them.

"As they called them, [As the prophets called Israel to repentance] So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk [Ephraim, as the leading tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel, put here for the nation as a whole, cf. verses 8, 12], Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, Because they refused to repent" (Hosea 11:2-5).

Having once entered into the relationship with God, as his sons in an intimate way, Israel was eventually cut off, because they too had continued to walk after idols, and the lusts of the flesh. God sent the nation of Israel into captivity by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:14-18, 23).

However, God has not forgotten Israel. And he will one day bring them to repentance, and reclaim them as his sons:

"Then God said: 'Call his name Lo-Ammi,

[Hebrew for not-my-people] For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," There it shall be said to them, "You are sons of the living God" ' " (Hosea 1:9-10; cf. Isaiah 43:1-6).

### - CITIZENS AND SONS NOW -

Getting back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote to the Gentiles in the Church - and his remarks could apply also to those among the converted members of the Church who were descendants of Israel: "**Now**, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**" (Ephesians 2:19).

Relatively few of us speak or read Greek, the language in which this letter to the Ephesians was originally written. However, with a Greek-English interlinear Bible and the *Analytical Greek Lexicon* you can find the morphology, or grammatical form, of particular Greek words used in the New Testament. There are now a number of computer programs that will give you the same information.

The morphology for the Greek word translated "you are" (NKJV) in Ephesians 2:19 is in part, present tense, indicative mood. Usually, not always but usually, a verb in the present tense, indicative mood in New Testament Greek implies present and continuing action, as in this verse. Paul is saying to the believers in Ephesus, that they are "no longer" considered strangers, but are - **now** - citizens of spiritual Israel and members of God's household.

These words imply citizenship, as in citizens of a nation, a polity, a country. They also imply membership in a household, or a family, in this case, God's family. There's nothing here about "applying" to be citizens, or "applying" to be members of the household.

The reference is to the fact that as Gentiles, both spiritually as well as physically, the Gentile converts in Ephesus had been heretofore regarded as foreigners, non-citizens, and non-members of God's household. But now, through repentance and conversion, through the mercy of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they had been brought into a saving relationship with God, and now they were no longer cut off from him, but were now citizens of his kingdom, and members of his household.

Among the Israelites, who had been chosen of God as his nation, there were "citizens," full members of the Israelite nation, and there were strangers who dwelt among them, but were not

full citizens of the nation, as well as foreigners passing through or dwelling in other lands.

And so it is also in a spiritual sense. In the spiritual application, a "Jew," a citizen of spiritual Israel, a seed of Abraham, is one who is genuinely converted. One who has surrendered to God and obeys God through faith.

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:25-29).

Paul goes on to further explain that those of faith - whether circumcised (Jews or Israelites) or uncircumcised (Gentiles) - are counted as "seed," or descendants of Abraham, and therefore citizens, as it were, of spiritual Israel, and as members of the household of faith, heirs of the promise belonging to the seed of Abraham.

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.' Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of



Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:7-16).

Paul further explains (in Romans 9) that it is those who walk in faith, like Abraham, who are true Israelites, and who are, in a spiritual sense, the children of God and heirs of the promise.

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption [or sonship, as it could be translated], the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. **For they are not all Israel who are of Israel**, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' **That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed**" (Romans 9:1-8).

### - FAITH AND OBEDIENCE -

Note that the "seed" being spoken of here, the "children of the promise," meaning the promise of an inheritance in the kingdom of God, are accounted as children of God. **What makes one a child of the promise?** As Paul explains, it is faith, the faith that produces godly character through which one becomes obedient to God.

"What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law" (Romans 9:30-32).

It's very important to understand that the "law" Paul speaks of, to the Jews, included their traditions, which took precedence over the word of God. These were, "...legal determinations, which traditionalism declared absolutely binding on all, **not only of equal, but even greater obligation than Scripture itself**. Thus we read: 'The sayings of the elders have more weight than those of the prophets' (Jer. Ber. i. 7); 'an offence against the sayings of the Scribes is worse than one against those of Scripture' (Sanh. xi. 3)]. And this not illogically, since tradition was [considered to be] equally of Divine origin with Holy Scripture... [as the Pharisees viewed it]" (*Life and Times of Jesus the*

*Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, Hendrickson, 1993, p. 68).

Their pursuit of righteousness through their traditions - their "law," in place of faith and obedience to God and his law - ironically led them to reject the commandments of God, as Jesus pointed out, and ultimately, to reject Christ.

"He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.' He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition'" (Mark 7:6-9).

Continuing in Romans: "For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame'" (Romans 9:32-33).

Paul explains further:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, **have not submitted to the righteousness of God**" (Romans 10:1-3).

Note they refused to submit to the righteousness of God, as expressed in his word. God does not regard as his children in a spiritual sense those who pursue righteousness through their own customs, or traditions, or their own ideas of what righteousness is (whether Jewish, "Christian," pagan, or otherwise). God's children, spiritually, are those who pursue and attain godly righteousness through genuine faith in Christ, which implies obedience through faith to his commandments.

It is when we submit to God in genuine repentance and faith in Christ, and quit living according to the lusts of the flesh, but seek in faith to live righteously before God in accordance with his law that we become citizens of his kingdom, and members of his spiritual household.

Paul wrote:

"For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

In Philippians 3:20 the Greek word translated "is" is also present tense, indicative mood. Our citizenship **is now** in heaven. That is we have not just a citizenship in whatever physical nation we happen to be citizens of, but a claim to

citizenship in the Kingdom of God, as members of his spiritual family and nation.

Moreover, Paul wrote:

"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and **conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love**, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:12-15).

God is now allowing Satan to continue to hold sway over mankind on the earth. When Christ returns he will dispose of Satan and take over direct rule on the earth, establishing the authority of his government directly over mankind. Meanwhile, however, **if we have repented and received the Holy Spirit, we are considered members or citizens of his kingdom now, no longer given over to Satan, but having submitted ourselves to God's authority and rule**.

Through godly faith, one is made a **son of God** (spiritually) as well:

"For **you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus**. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are **Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**" (Galatians 3:26-29).

Again, the verb here in verse 26, translated "you are" -- as in "you are all sons of God" -- is in the present tense, indicative mood. If you have "put on Christ" through, genuine, ongoing repentance and a valid baptism (Acts 2:38), you are now a son of God, and an heir according to the promise.

### - THE PROMISED INHERITANCE -

Even though we are now sons, and citizens of God's kingdom, **we await our inheritance**. Just as the Israelites in the wilderness, before they entered the promised land, were **members of the nation of Israel, although they had not yet received the promised inheritance**.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, **that we should be called children of God!** Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, **now we are children of God**; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2).

Note that John says "now we are children of God." Even though we are now children of God, we await the resurrection, and the "metamorphosis" so to speak, when we will no



longer be flesh and blood, but **we shall share God's nature in the very fullest sense as members of the divine family** (1 Corinthians 15:49-53; Philippians 3:21; 2 Peter 1:4).

John went on to write:

"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

We do not "apply" to become citizens of God's kingdom and family at baptism. When one genuinely repents and is baptized in accordance with Scripture, he enters into a spiritual fellowship with God and becomes a "citizen" of his kingdom at that time and a member of his spiritual household.

Yet, as God's children we must live lives pleasing to God, and becoming for a child of God. We must keep ourselves pure from the world, pure from sin, as we strive to live lives of repentance and faith toward God.

We are being judged by whether we will remain faithful to our commitment or not, as many Scriptures show.

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Note that as members of God's household, we are being judged.

If we are not faithful, we can be stripped of our citizenship and cast out, as happened to the ancient Israelites.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself **should become disqualified**" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27);

As we repent in faith God qualifies us for citizenship in his kingdom (Colossians 1:12-13), but we can yet disqualify ourselves if we do not remain faithful.

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Hebrews 2:1-3).

Peter admonished:

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of

our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1-10).

While as we've seen we are citizens of the kingdom upon meeting the qualifications outlined in Scripture, yet we have not yet entered into the kingdom fully, as the Israelites in the wilderness had not yet entered the promised land. We could, as they did, lose out on our inheritance if we turn aside from God.

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Peter 2:20-21; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

We have entered into the covenant relationship with God, in a way similar to Israel at Mt. Sinai, but we have not yet entered the "rest," the promised land.

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest,"' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God

rested on the seventh day from all His works'; and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.' Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, 'Today,' after such a long time, as it has been said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**" (Hebrews 4:1-11).

For truly converted Christians, the inheritance is ours to lose, but we have yet to receive it in full.

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the **saints to possess the kingdom.** (Daniel 7:21-22).

Jesus said:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matthew 25:31-34).

If we overcome, we will remain sons of God in his family and kingdom forever.

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7).

Meanwhile, it's important to remember that we are God's children now, in one way or another. He is our Father, and he cares for us as any loving Father cares for his children, only more so. Seek God's guidance and direction in your life, and never forget that you are one of his children.



**C**an a war be won without the will to win? Without the determination to persevere, even in the face of setbacks and reverses? Without a zeal for victory? Understand why the answer to this question should matter to every Christian!

There's something about war that often gets people excited and infused with a zeal for battle. In the initial stages of war there is not uncommonly a wave of enthusiasm as soldiers are drafted or line up to enlist.

Historian James McPherson comments in his history of the American Civil War, titled *Battle Cry of Freedom*, that in the immediate aftermath of the Confederates firing on Fort Sumter, "War fever ...overrode sober reflections on the purpose of the fighting." Yet, a common phrase reflected in the diaries and letters of Union soldiers was that their motive for fighting was "to maintain the best government on earth." A New Jersey soldier wrote, "We will be held responsible before God if we don't do our part in helping to transmit this boon of civil and religious liberty down to succeeding generations" (pp. 308-309).

For their part, many in the South were motivated by a determination not to be dominated by the North or to see their land invaded by Northern armies without resistance. A southern diary reflected the sentiments of many Southern women at the outbreak of war, stating: "If every man did not hasten to battle, they vowed they would themselves rush out and meet the Yankee vandals" (*ibid.*, p. 311).

On the other hand, wars may start out with a sense of reluctance, foreboding, or sense of resignation, even if tempered with resolve and determination to prevail. When war broke out in Europe in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, it was met with a sense of trepidation in both Britain and France, memories of the appalling carnage of the First World War still fresh on their minds. Even in Germany, there was a sense of apathy. William Shirer, a reporter for CBS radio in Berlin at the time, wrote in his book, *The Nightmare Years, 1930 - 1940*, "I... went out into the streets to see how the German people were taking the coming of war. They struck me as apathetic.

.....  
"What a contrast, I imagined, between this gray apathy and the way it had been here the day the war started in 1914. Then, from all I had read, there had been a wild enthusiasm for the war" (pp. 444-445).

The point is, war often generates excitement, energy, animation. It's amazing in a way that people can get so excited about killing, maiming, destroying other people. That could be one way of looking at

it. And often war does engender a kind of bloodlust in many people.

Not uncommonly, people tend to see war in terms of good verses evil. The enemy is often pictured as evil and threatening. Even aggressors may seek to stir up passionate support by manipulating public opinion to make themselves appear to be victims.

Prior to attacking Poland, Adolf Hitler, the German Chancellor, arranged a fake attack by Nazi S.S. troops dressed in Polish uniforms against a German radio station near the Polish border. About a dozen concentration camp prisoners, also dressed in Polish uniforms, were left dead on the scene as "proof" of the purported Polish attack. Similar incidents occurred elsewhere to justify the invasion of Poland that Hitler had planned for months. In a speech the day the Germans attacked Poland, Hitler sought to justify the assault on Poland with false charges that the Polish army had begun firing on German territory first.

The attack on the radio station was widely reported in the press, including newspapers in the United States, making it appear for a time that Poland was the instigator of the fighting.

People often enter into war in pursuit of what they perceive as their legitimate aspirations. Many may be willing to sacrifice everything, down to their very lives, to see their enemy defeated. And they may fight on even with no hope of victory until overtaken by death or exhaustion.

While there are a variety of factors involved in winning a war, a battle, a sporting contest, or being successful in life, zeal is one of them. Zeal can be defined as fervor, eager desire, enthusiastic diligence, ardor. It can be manifested in a variety of ways, but to result in victory it must endure.

Historian William C. Davis writing about why the North won the American Civil War, concludes that because of the South's disadvantages in manpower, industrial capacity, etc., the only way it could have won the war was a lack of necessary determination and staying

power by the North, in other words, a lack of zeal for victory.

Early in the war many in the South thought they could win, despite their disadvantages. But, Davis writes, "The most important things they couldn't see was the determination of Abraham Lincoln to win, and the incredible staying power of the people of the North, who stuck by Lincoln and stuck by the war in spite of the first two years of almost unrelenting defeat. The only way the South could have won would have been for Lincoln to decide to lose. As long as Lincoln was determined to prosecute the war and as long as the North was behind him, inevitably superior manpower and resources just had to win out" ("Why the South Lost the Civil War," *historynet.com*, 8-19-1999; retrieved 12-12-2017).

A secular historian might not be expected to identify an even more important factor: God willed the Union to remain intact at that time, as he had a plan for the United States in keeping with his promise to Abraham, and his descendants. Nevertheless, Davis' point is well taken.

## The Christian Struggle

What about us as Christians? How deeply do we realize that we are in a life and death struggle to overcome? That our very lives, our destiny is at stake, and indirectly the destiny of all mankind? (Matthew 24:22; Romans 12:21; 2 Peter 2:19-21; Revelation 21:7).

Paul wrote near the end of his life: "I have **fought the good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Our war is **not a physical but a spiritual one**. Can we be as zealous about it as people sometimes are in the physical wars they fight?

I say again, our war not a physical war against enemies of flesh and blood. As Paul wrote, "...though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3). Rather as we shall see, our war is spiritual in nature, our enemies are those of the spirit, and our weapons are those of the spirit. This will be

# Zeal for Victory

Rod Reynolds



explained in more detail below.

## Zeal and Confidence

But first I want us to consider how an effective soldier should think, what his attitude should be. To gain victory a soldier must go into battle with zeal and confidence. David's battle with Goliath provides an example. Take note of the zeal and confidence with which David went into battle against the enemy of Israel:

"Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle.... And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped... and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

"And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span [about nine and a half to twelve feet]. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. [Approximately 180 lbs. (avoirdupois or common pound of 16 ounces) based on a shekel weighing 252 grains troy. [1] The estimate given in *Gill's* commentary is 156 lbs.] And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam [which are of various lengths, Gill estimates 26 feet long; JFB [2] estimates under five feet long; but we are not given the precise length, and spears historically have been of varying lengths and styles], and his iron spearhead [weighed] six hundred shekels [about 21.6 lbs., or 15 lbs to 19 lbs by some estimates (Holman Christian Standard Bible, *Gill's* Commentary)]; and a shield-bearer went before him.

"Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, 'Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.' And the Philistine said, 'I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were **dismayed and greatly afraid**.

.....  
"And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers. Then as he talked with

them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were **dreadfully afraid**. So the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel.' Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?'

.....  
"Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him. Then David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.' But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and **this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God**.' Moreover David said, 'The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the Lord be with you!'

.....  
"Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine. So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking. So the Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!' Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But **I come to you in the name**

**of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you.** And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; **for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.**'

So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled" (1 Samuel 17:1-11, 22-26, 31-37, 40-51).

David displayed confidence not just in his own skills but in God's power to deliver him and give him the victory. Contrast David's courage and confidence with the fear displayed by the rest of Israel's army before the giant was slain.

Confidence and zeal alone, however, are not enough for victory. A soldier must know his enemy and he must have the proper weapons to defeat him. Do we know our enemies? Do we even realize we are in a spiritual war? Who are our enemies in this contest?

## First Enemy — Self

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And **everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things**. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

"Temperate" (verse 25), translated from the Greek word ἐγκρατεύομαι (*enkrateuomai*), means to exercise restraint, or self control. The self with its fleshly lusts and desires must be conquered and brought under control.

Paul wrote, "For I know that in me (that is,

in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Romans 7:18-19).

This is our carnal nature, our fleshly mind, unconquered by God's Spirit, at work. To overcome the carnal nature requires discipline, and determination, as reflected in what we read earlier in 1 Corinthians 9. But it also requires God's Spirit working with us empower us to overcome.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, **who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:1-10).

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

God makes available to us his Spirit, a **spirit of power** that can help us overcome ourselves, as well as our other enemies.

## Second Enemy — World

The world, in general terms, hates those who genuinely follow Jesus Christ. Jesus said, in a prayer to the Father, of his disciples: "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

Over the centuries, the agents of Satan in this world have persecuted, and murdered, untold thousands, probably millions, of men and women who sought to live according to the truth of God's word. In a similar manner, Christ was

murdered at the behest of Jewish and Roman authorities.

But he gave himself to deliver us from the world. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, **that He might deliver us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4).

James tells us true religion involves keeping one's self unspotted from the world. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Christ **overcame** the world: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

We, likewise, while we are in the world, are not to be of the world. That is, we are not to live according to worldly pleasures, desires, passions and customs that are ungodly, but we are to follow Christ, and live according to his word.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.** As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:14-20).

We must be able to see the difference between what the world, that is this society, would influence us to do, and what God requires of us in terms of walking according to his word.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

James wrote: "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

## Third Enemy — Satan and His Host

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the **whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand**

**against the wiles of the devil.** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against **spiritual hosts of wickedness** in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Satan is the "god of this world," or this present age. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the **god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, KJV)

In the NKJV it's translated "god of this age." Jesus referred to Satan as the "ruler of this world" in John 12:31, John 14:30 and John 16:11.

It is Satan who led his enemies to want to kill Jesus Christ. Jesus said to those who sought to kill him:

"But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this" (John 8:40). He went on to say: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

It's Satan who led Adam and Eve to reject God's law and sin. Satan has deceived the whole world, virtually all of it: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

We are in a struggle - a spiritual war - against Satan, and God wills that we overcome him just as Christ did when he was in the flesh.

The right weapons are important for victory in any war. One reason the Germans were able to overwhelm Poland in less than three weeks in 1939 is that they possessed more and better weapons, such as tanks and planes, than did the Poles. David, though his chances of defeating the giant may have seemed hopeless to onlookers, had just the right weapon to defeat Israel's enemy.

The weapons God has put at our disposal can empower us to overcome our enemies. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

As our war is not a carnal one, against fleshly enemies, but spiritual, our weapons are spiritual and are of God. "Therefore take up the



## I CORINTHIANS 9:24-27



*"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."*

whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:13-18).

Truth, that is, the word of God, righteousness, faith, the hope of salvation, the Spirit of God, prayer. These are our primary weapons. Fasting is another one that could be mentioned, along with these mentioned here. "Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, That became my reproach" (Psalm 69:9-10; cf. Joel 2:12-13; Matthew 17:21; James 4:8-10).

We must work, we must strive, but what makes the weapons truly effective is that through them God works in our lives to give us the mastery over our enemies. "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29).

"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your

understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the **exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power**" (Ephesians 1:15-19).

With God's Spirit working in us, through godly faith and obedience to his word, we can overcome. "**Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.** He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But **whoever keeps His word**, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk **just as He walked.**"

.....  
"I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the **word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one**" (1 John 2:3-6; 14).

We have available to us everything necessary to win the spiritual war we are engaged in. But we must exercise zeal and determination. Apathy, spiritual laziness and indifference, can defeat us, if we allow that to happen.

We are warned against apathy and a lack of zeal." And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your **works**, that you are **neither cold nor hot**. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

.....  
"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. **To him who overcomes** I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 3:14-16, 19-22)

David wrote: "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. You will save the humble people; But Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down. For You are my lamp, O Lord; The Lord shall enlighten my darkness. For **by You I can run against a troop**; By my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a **shield to all who trust in Him**. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? **God is my strength and power**, And He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places. **He teaches my hands to make war**, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me; So my feet did not slip" (2 Samuel 22:26-37).

If we can be properly motivated about fighting the spiritual battles of this life, understanding our enemies, having zeal tempered by wisdom, confidence in God and the spiritual weapons he's made available for us, we can't lose. Can we get excited about the cause of Christ to which we've been called to battle? It really is, without equivocation, the most holy and righteous cause possible. Why shouldn't we be enthusiastic and eager for battle, running as David to meet the enemy, trusting, as he did, that God would teach us to use the weapons he's given us to gain victory.





## IN THIS ISSUE

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“Adding Words to Scripture” – The Bible in English exists in many different translations. What does this mean for us today when we study scripture? We explore this subject with an example of a prominent mainstream doctrine.

“What Is the Kingdom of God” – Christ in His ministry spoke often of the kingdom of God. What does this term mean? Is it a feeling? Is it a belief? Is it a governmental rule? How does it relate to the plan of God? See what scripture says about this incredibly important subject!

“Citizens and Sons of God’s Kingdom” – Following up our exploration of the meaning of the Kingdom of God, we dig deeper into the amazing plan of God and what this means for those who follow Him!

“Zeal for Victory” – War, both physical and spiritual, is written much about in scripture. What war must Christians fight? How can victory be obtained? What is the reward for that victory? Find out what the Bible says about this significant subject and what it means for you!

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