

SERMONS I MAY NEVER PREACH PUBLICLY.

Introduction.

I am writing this little book of sermons so that if I never get to preach them in public I will have them here for any one who wishes to access them. I hope that they “strike a chord” with those who read them and that they may help in all cases. May God bless and keep you in all your ways.

SERMON NUMBER 1, “LOST.”

She stood there frozen and completely numb as the enormity of it swept over her. Married for only two days and this beautiful young bride felt the fear creep over her. “What if my husband finds out?” She silently said to herself, “how can I tell him, how can I hide it from him?” Panic was about to claim her but something inside begun to take over and she began to move. “I’ve just got to find it,” and so saying she turned on the lights, got a broom, and began to sweep and to move her whole house.

Hours passed although she was oblivious to it she **had** to find it before her husband got home from work. Finally after the fourth time of cleaning and searching there it was hidden in the corner she had looked in at least six times. With trembling hands and with sweat pouring down her face she stooped down and picked it up. A wave of euphoria washed over her as she stood back up and then she called all her friends and invited them to come over and celebrate with her for you see she had found her husband’s expensive engagement ring given to her with much love. Every woman knows what that means and how valuable it is.

Lost: *απολλυμι* or *απολλυο* this is the theme of **Luke 15**. The word means to be lost throughout the chapter except in verse **17** where it is translated “dying” (Of hunger). Jesus as He went about the countryside would attract all sorts of people to him. Here in **Luke 15**, it happened to be the tax gatherers and sinners as well as the Scribes and the Pharisees who as was their custom were complaining loudly that Jesus was fraternising with this riff - raff.

Among the sinners were crowds of lost, lonely, confused, and hurting people Jesus, as always, feeling compassion for them told them to sit down. Some were weeping; some were rubbing their face and hair with anguish and some were sitting quiet and still. All, however, knew they were in some sense lost and broken inside, and all were waiting to hear what Jesus would tell them to ease their troubled hearts.

Then Jesus motions with His hand and a deathly hush comes over this crowd. He looks at them and with His own heart breaking He says to them, "My friends, let Me tell you a story." Now you can feel the silence as they all crane forward to hear.

Jesus begins: "You know don't you how a woman who has ten coins suddenly realises that one is missing? Well after the panic and fear of what her husband might do if he finds out that one of his 'betrothal coins' is missing she suddenly gets into action. She lights a lamp, she gets a broom, she turns up all her furniture and she leaves no stone unturned as she frantically searches for that one coin. No matter what it takes or how long it takes she will not rest until she finds it. At last she spies it and with trembling fingers picks it up and puts it on the string with the other nine coins and puts it back around her neck. Then she calls all her friends and they celebrate her finding of that coin everyone is overjoyed and euphoric and the woman's honour is saved."

Everyone is silent as Jesus ends His story the people look perplexed and stare at each other. Some scratch their heads in bewilderment. Jesus turns to the crowd and says very quietly, "Don't you see, that's the way God is. He sees the lost and lonely, He sees the hurt and confused, and they are the ones He searches for day and night. They are the ones He longs to welcome into His home. You see for every lost sinner who repents there is a joyous celebration in The halls of heaven, the angels weep and sing for joy because one sinner has repented and returned home. The Father is overjoyed at all such restorations."

In the crowd it begins to dawn on some of them. A woman begins to weep, an Old man shakes his head and smiles; a child tugs on her mother's skirt asking urgently, "mummy will God look for me too?" All those broken people now had something that they had lost restored to them and that was hope.

I don't know about you, but if I were there I would have felt special to know that God will never stop looking for me until I die. That would have comforted me so much. It also of course explains the engagement ring story as well. You see many in this world will never be searched for by anyone and some even in the church will not be looked at with any great esteem but God is not like this. Every hurt and lonely person who heard that story would go home rejoicing that God is such a loving caring Father.

It must have been amazing for those who heard Jesus that day but it didn't end with that story. Jesus went on to tell the story of the lost boy which we know as the prodigal son. I can imagine the Scribes and the Pharisees choking with anger as Jesus told them about the elder brother's attitude. Why is he so

special? Look at him he is an immoral filthy profligate who has given you a bad name, tarnished the family reputation, publicly disgraced us, and

You want to welcome him back here with a party; you've got to be kidding. He ought to be thrown out and publicly pilloried.

Ah but then I can see too the absolute joy in the hearts and on the faces of the lost, hurt, lonely, and confused ones as Jesus tells them. "Look the Father is out every day looking down the road for his lost boy and for each of you. When He sees His boy and you coming in repentance far far down that road, His heart cries out in joy, his eyes tear up with emotion, and He runs down to meet and embrace you. Again there is such a celebration in heaven the angels are singing and the father is overjoyed. My friends, you are children of a king who loves you more than anything in the heavens or the earth therefore you too love each other like that and search out for others who want to return home."

When I sin, others may say about it, "look at him he ought to know better than that, he just isn't real about his faith is he? He deserves to be ostracised." It's times like that when I can listen again to these stories of Jesus. And in my hurt and confusion and loneliness know that God keeps searching for me, and runs to my side and embraces me in my repentance and restores me to His house because He knows how hard I try.

May it never be that we go out of our way to hurt a penitent believer with the "elder brother" holier than thou attitude. Rather bind up their wounds, embrace them with the Father's love, and always search for the wisdom and True love to compassionately bind up the hurting and wounded and help them home to heaven, even if we sometimes have to carry them.

SERMON NUMBER 2, "UNAWARE."

The word here is [αγνοεω](#) "to be unaware or ignorant of." There are many things in the world that we are unaware of, and there are many others that we should not be unaware of for if we are it could lead to our death. Many things promise so much and at the end deliver little or nothing. But worse are the things that look right and proper but when followed lead on to certain destruction. That is to say nothing of misreading something that may not be misleading you.

Have you ever heard of a "Jack o' lantern?" This is the light that is sometimes seen at the edge of a swamp it looks like a flickering light, so benign and friendly, but you better not follow it. In Gaelic folklore this light was thought to be ghosts or spirits and was called a "Ghost light," or the "Devil's light." It was a hot sultry night and two friends who had been out celebrating were driving home. As they travelled on in the early hours of the morning both were tired

and instead of stopping to rest they carried on. As they rounded a curve by the marshland one of them saw a light dancing in front of them through the mist. "There it is," said one friend to the other, "the light of Grannies porch." "Are you sure?" said his friend. "No doubt," said the other, "I'd know that friendly sparkling light anywhere," so he gunned the engine and began to follow the dancing twinkling light.

Then as they rounded a corner the car slid sideways and crashed through the barrier into the marsh and began to sink. The two friends knew this was it, for even if they got out of the car, the quicksand would grasp them in her silky fingers and pull them to their death.

As they were sinking to their death they looked at Jack o' lantern and cursed him for their plight. "You miserable pathetic fraud, you lured us here to our death. You are a cruel cold hearted killer." "Me a killer," Jack replied. "It was you who followed me, if I am as you say then why did you follow me?" Anyway I was simply hovering over the edge of the marsh to warn you not to get any closer. Too many people accuse me of things that are not true, and if you were really wise you would have known not to come after me."

The two friends were silent and then they slipped away under the mud to be lost forever. Now isn't that the way with a lot of us? We are really unaware of things that could spell death for us if we continue to follow that which we think is right or what we are not really sure of?

Over the years many have followed Jack o' lantern to their end, and each time they have been caught, yet just before their death they have cursed old Jack.

And each time Jack would repeat his story that he was simply edge of the swamp to warn them. Politicians have been caught and tried to change things by asking for Jack to let them go since the country needed their expertise and wisdom. Jack sneered at them and said, "If you were that wise you would not have ended up here would you?"

Once, a long time ago, one man was taking his daughter home from a school play, and as they went along his daughter saw the light and said to her father, "Look dad there's the light of our porch." "No sweetheart," replied the father, "if we follow that light we'll end up in the swamp and be drowned." And so saying he turned the car away and got home safely. You see he was not unaware; he knew what the light of Jack O'Lantern was and where it would end. Strangely

it also bore out what Jack had always said. “I am here to warn you not to come any closer.” If only the others had known what that light really was then none would have died at all.

Another name for “Jack o’ Lantern” is the “Devils light,” and that is what this is about, we do not need to be unaware that this light is always around in the swampy ground of this world, and like Jack it will lead you to your death. The devil can mimic an angel of light, but can you tell the difference??? Many cannot and so die on the spiritual morass, sure they’ll blame the devil’s light, but it cannot save them in the final analysis.

Consider the spiritual “Jack o’ Lantern” dancing through the souls of men and women today. The devil’s light of evolution, this is killing our children and grand children so many follow it now and it is taught as fact rather than the fiction it is. Yes the devil has his “story of creation” too, but follow it at your peril.

The devil’s light of situation and post-modern ethics, so many have followed this light to their doom also. The devil’s light of relative truth, again so many lost in that swamp. We could go on and on, but these are enough to show the folly of being unaware of the source of these “lights.”

Strangely though like Jack, they do warn us of where they will end, they feel good but hurt you so badly. The source of these lights is their own warning and if you are unaware of that source then you will follow the lights to your doom. So please, become wise check the source of the lights before you and don’t let “Jack o’ Lantern” take your soul.

SERMON NUMBER 3, “WATER FOR THE SOUL.”

When we have a drought, we know that the garden and the ground need one thing and that is water. Have you ever noticed that after a prolonged dry spell how the flowers are all bent over, they do not have their bright colours, and everything looks as if it is in suspended animation, just going through the motions of existence.

Then we get a shower of rain and everything changes doesn’t it? The flowers lift up their heads and wave it looks like in thanks for the water. The colours are many times brighter. The bees arrive and look busier as they collect the pollen and fertilise the other plants. Then there is that rich, clean, magic smell as the flowers give off their perfume. Everything is so peaceful, serene and so much happier.

In [\(Isaiah 58:10-11\)](#), we have a similar story of a drought that has been ended but in this case it applies to our souls. Notice the words:

“If you give yourself to the hungry,
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then your light will rise in darkness.
And your gloom will become like midday.
And the Lord will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched
Places, and give strength to your bones.
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose
Waters do not fail.”

Note here that in order to relieve the drought of the soul we must be prepared to give ourselves away for it is then that the Spirit can come and water our soul's garden. These verses in Isaiah tell us that we must begin to live for others. Now this is neither easy nor natural. That is why when we see verses such as these we often blink at them or even pretend to miss them completely. However, there they are and we must apply them as we would any other verses that exhort us how to do the best we can in living for Jesus.

One of the great dangers for us is the danger of becoming “infatuated” with the truth and allowing that to actually make us useless by becoming inefficient in actually applying that truth. We know that Jesus did not please Himself; He lived so that others might be saved from spiritual drought. This is the truth that Isaiah wants us to see and understand in the passage before us.

The writer of [\(Proverbs 3:6\)](#), has the same thought in view when he says:

“In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.”

Thus we are to look to God before we do anything. We are to search His word and then by acknowledging that proceed to do what the truth requires of us. This is to get us to know by experience the joy of being His servant. Many have great “spiritual experiences” but appear not to know about the effects the joy of service has upon the garden of a servant's soul.

When we begin to doubt where we are at then sometimes it is then that we need to see how we can be a blessing to someone else. When we help another person to find their way we are told in this passage of Isaiah that at least seven things will happen.

- (1) Our own light will shine brighter. We DO HAVE A LIGHT (Matthew 5:16). We are to let it shine, and this passage in Isaiah shows us *how* to let it shine.
- (2) Our inner darkness will become like the noonday. Again if we want to dispel our own darkness, then lighten the way for someone else.
- (3) The Lord will guide us continually. It is His greatest pleasure when we show someone else the way home. God will guide us through it. It will not always be easy, sometimes it is long hard and painful for all involved yet in the dark times never ever give up. We have to go ahead to see ahead.
- (4) When we help others our soul will be satisfied and the thirst of your own heart will be removed. (Psalm 63:1)

“O God, you are my God;
I shall seek you early;
My soul thirsts for you,
My flesh yearns for you.”

When we truly seek after God then we are saying to Him, “you have helped me now out of gratitude I will help others.” That is loving others as He has loved us.

- (5) When we forget our troubles and ourselves it tends to lead on to good all round health. (Proverbs 11:25).

“The generous person will be prosperous
And he who waters will himself be watered.”

(6) Your life will be made like a watered garden. You will have watered the fruits of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the hidden flowers of the heart, the flowers God loves the most. (Galatians 6:22-23). Just above those verses are the weeds of the flesh that need to be pulled out. Immorality, impurity, drunkenness’ etc.

(7) Christ and His Spirit will then water your whole life. These then are the things we need to seek. To help others and so fulfil the law of Christ.

SERMON NUMBER 4, "ON BEING A CHRISTIAN."

What does it mean to be a Christian? My guess is that it really does mean different things to different people. To many non-Christians it means that one is a mental and physical wimp and a moral prude. To those of other religions it means ill-informed apostates among other things. To those of different denominations it can mean legalistic, narrow-minded, those who think they are the only saved ones that will enter heaven, and that they are the only true church.

Now what about Christians? What does it mean to be a true Bible believing member of Christ's church, a baptised believer? Again I'll wager that it will mean different things to different people in the church according to their background and the way they view others among other things.

Since this is the case I can only tell you what it means for me to be a true Christian, one baptised for the remission of my sins and then added to the Lord's church. What it means for you I don't know for you have not told me, neither have I asked. You do not have to tell me if you wish not to either. I do think, however, that each of us should **know** what it means for us and really not be afraid to tell others if and when we are asked to.

It seems that many Christians want to highlight *their strength* "Look at me" they seem to be saying at least implicitly. Surely too they do not fall into "*big sins*" at least not that anyone is aware of. Are you sure though? Many pride themselves in this "strength" and then use it against others in a form of spiritual control that immediately belies that "strength." Still others wear it like a badge of self-righteousness and become defacto "guardians of the church's purity." "You must come up to my standard, defer to my wisdom, I will tell you when you are ready to be baptised, when you can preach or teach and whatever else.

If one is like this then my question to him is this: What does he know of weakness? You see when I say that I am a Christian I am not trying to parade my strength rather I am professing that I am weak and in need of daily strength to keep on walking in the right way and praying for the strength to carry on.

I am only as strong as my weakest point of temptation, my "besetting sin." Also it is worth knowing that I can only ever be as strong as I allow the Lord to make me. You know too don't you that compared to Christ we are all so very very weak.

I am so painfully aware that so many times in my life I have not allowed

Jesus to strengthen me, as I should and when that has happened I have fallen. Not the same as others for we all have our Achilles heel.

I will, however, never boast in my own strength since in and of my selfish fleshly nature I have none whatsoever. That's why I am a Christian since it is Christ that makes up the difference for the strength I lack. If I repent and let Him take up the slack and stop trying to go my own way.

So then for me being a Christian is admitting that I am weak and in need of the saviour's strength, and praying daily for that strength. If I ever forget that I have given up on the truth that I need Christ always and that He provides the strength to carry on.

I have also found that many Christians trumpet out loud that they are saved. This is not inherently wrong for if we remain faithful we are indeed saved. Yet could it be *how* one speaks of their salvation? I think it's all too easy to shout out "I'm saved" and leave the non-Christian or the weak Christian burned by a prideful tone of voice or the "stare" of the superior and self satisfied "Christian."

As a Christian I am thankful that I am saved and I love Jesus a lot because He has forgiven me of some monumental sins. And this love, first from Christ toward me, and then my love for Him out of sheer gratitude for that equally monumental forgiveness. Even though I know that this saves me and should and does make me grateful being a Christian means to me that I am also whispering that I get lost sometimes and that is why I became a Christian.

Now I'm not a shouter but if anyone wishes to listen to me I will tell of the amazing love that lifted me out of the cesspool of sin and took a shattered heart and a broken spirit and wiped away the heart tears of a confused and dying man. Truly without Him and His amazing love and infinite patience I would be truly lost and alone and as nothing.

Along this line I have seen Christians who seem to love to judge. But they judge on sin, that is big, medium, or small sin and treat their brother or sister according to that judgement. This I believe serves no Biblical purpose. If we do this we have compounded the problem. We forget so easily that the sin of gossip can be worse than the sin of murder don't we? Again we see that this becomes another game of **self**. Self righteousness, self satisfaction, and self appraisal that says, "I'm not as bad as you are."

Funny though is it not that we are all in the same hospital (the church), all suffering from the same fatal disease (sin), needing the same doctor (Christ), and all needing the same cure (forgiveness). Now does this really show that any

are better than anyone else? I think not. The disease may not be seen to be so severe in some yet remember this the least bit of the disease cost Christ His life and only He can heal it no matter what degree you think you may have the disease in your soul.

Thus to me as a Christian I do not want to play the judge of another Christian's heart, I have no authority to do this. All I know is that Christ loves me, Christ forgives me, and I am grateful. This is all I know a Christian can do, go out and love and forgive others just as Christ has loved and forgiven me. I don't need a trumpet; I just need grateful, humble, honest, and caring love and compassion for others.

When we become Christians we should not make the mistake of claiming that we are now *perfect*. We are forgiven and that does not equate with perfection. In fact *perfect* equates with spiritual maturity not sinlessness. This being so to claim that one is more perfect than a brother or sister in the sin sense is the opposite for it is an immature thing to do spiritually speaking.

When I think of what it means to be a Christian I am struck with the fact that I can never claim to be perfect, why? Because my imperfections are all visible, how about yours? Yes they are too to God if to no one else. But even though this is true God believes that you and I are worth the price paid for our redemption. Surely that speaks volumes of our equality before Him.

I guess though we will always have Mr and Mrs Perfect at every service among us. Always sitting up front, always working and telling others about that work, but also quick to say how others don't measure up. Don't you know that this is not what it's all about?

As a Christian I cannot boast of success, all I can do is admit that I have failed many times and need Christ to pay the debt that I can't pay myself. As a Christian I confess that I stumble and because of that I need Christ to be my guide. These are the things that I believe I need to know what it means for me to be a Christian.

Yes brethren it's all about gratitude, thankfulness, healing, acceptance, compassion, and forgiveness. All these are attributes of Christ that need to be reflected in us if we are to truly be like Him. Since it is I who am weak when compared with Him, it is I who stumble and need Him as my guide, it is I who am flawed and imperfect and need His mercy and grace to get me through. I thank my God that He has not dealt with me *according to my sin* and that He is aware that my frame is but dust. Yet **He is able to deliver me** and that is my comfort in my darkest days and that is what it means for me to be a Christian, how about you?

SERMON NUMBER 5, "HAVE YOU LOST THE LORD?"

In (John 20:11-13), there is a poignant moment recorded for us.

“But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so as she wept she stooped and looked in the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, ‘Woman why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have Laid him.’”

You see Mary was upset because she thought she had lost the Lord. To her this was truly shattering. This Mary **verse 18** informs us was Mary Magdalene. Many think that she was a “great sinner”, the woman spoken of in **Luke 7:47** whom Jesus says, “her sins are many.” Yet because she had been forgiven much she loved much and is the object lesson in true gratitude for being forgiven. Simon the Pharisee, the other one in the lesson, the elder brother of **Luke 15** and all people of like personality, do not seem to understand this concept. Their aim seems to be to continue to punish and remind the sinner of their sin thus never seeming to forgive or forget as God has done.

For Mary then, to have lost her Lord was such desolation and shock, and now she cannot even minister to the one she loved so much by attending to His burial needs. She was in shock, numb, bewildered, and spinning around emotionally. Under this kind of pressure and sorrow the loss of her Lord opened the floodgate of her heart’s tears. She feels lost and lonely; she cannot locate the Lord’s body and has lost all sense of his presence.

How about you have you lost the Lord? And if you have lost Him where would you go to look for Him again? Many like Mary under pressure and trial, or having much sorrow in their lives just cannot seem to locate the Lord. Many have left the church and gone back into the world or denominations and there they have lost Him and the sense of His presence.

Have you been losing the sense of His presence in your life? If so, where do you think you broke company with him and lost him? You see He never leaves or loses us (**Hebrews 13:5**) thus if He is lost to us it is we who have broken the bond of fellowship with Him.

One of the places where we could have parted company with Him is at the place of forgotten promises. In (Psalm 27:13) David (who lost the Lord on a number of occasions) cries out:

“I would have despaired unless I had believed
that I would see the goodness of the lord in
the land of the living.”

The Lord always keeps His promises, and as David says in the next verse,

“Wait for the Lord; ***be strong*** and
let your heart take courage;
yes wait for the lord.”

Meditation on the Lord’s promises will always bring you the sense of His presence. In (Psalm 61:2, 4) David again calls out:

“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I
for thou hast been a refuge for me;
A tower of strength against the enemy.
Let me dwell in thy tent forever; let me
Take refuge in the shelter of thy wings.”

When you lose the Lord, the sense of His presence, then go back to some solid promises and hold on tight to them. When you do this you will feel the Lord’s presence near to you. “Impossible” I hear you say, Yet look in (Luke 18:27), With God ***all things are possible.***

“I can’t do it,” you say, yet in (Proverbs 3:26) “The Lord will be your confidence.” Then in (Philippians 4:13) “You ***can*** do all things through Christ.”

“I can’t handle it,” you say. Yet in (Psalm 55:22) “Cast your burden on Me, I’ll help you carry it.”

“But I’m so tired,” you say. Yet in (Isaiah 40:31) “Wait on Me and I will renew your strength.”

“But nobody loves me,” you say. Yet in (Jeremiah 31:3) “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

“But I can’t go on,” you say. Yet in [\(II Corinthians 12:9\)](#) “My grace is sufficient for you.” Do you get the picture?

Meditation on these wonderful promises will always bring the sense of His presence. However, these promises need to be supported by prayer. You see prayer or rather the neglect of it is another place that we can lose the Lord. In fact I think it is the place that we most often lose Him. In [\(Luke 18:1\)](#) we are counselled to always pray and never faint. This is because Satan always sits at the gate of prayer watching us. This is the most strategic point of our lives for if Satan is able to get us to become slap-happy with prayer he will get us to eventually neglect prayer altogether. Then we will have lost the Lord since prayer is our only avenue of communication with Him.

Feeble, formal, cold-hearted prayers help nobody when storms of trial, sin, temptation, and numbing shock swirl about us. If we are not praying in the sunshine we will find ourselves unable to find him in the darkness of the storm.

Here we need to go back to [\(Philippians 4:6-7\)](#) and recover the presence of the Lord through the peace of God that passes all understanding. Go back to [\(Ephesians 3:20\)](#) “Now to Him ***who is able*** to do exceedingly abundantly ***beyond all that we ask or think*** according to the power that works within us.”

There are other places in our lives where we could lose our Lord but these two show us how easy it can be to do so.

Finally there is a triad of verses in [\(Ephesians\)](#) that tie us to the Lord forever and we need to etch them on our collective memories. They are:

1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places In Christ.”

1:20

“Which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.”

2:6

“And raised us up with Him and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Tie this together with [\(Revelation 3:21\)](#)

“He who overcomes I will grant to him to sit
down with Me on My throne, as I also
overcame and sat down with My Father
on His throne.”

These four verses show us that we need never lose the Lord or not know where to find Him. Unlike Mary we can always know where He is. But like Mary if we have lost Him we should weep. Many do not but believe me they will later on when He consigns them to the fires of hell because they would not repent and retrace their steps in order to find him again.

Mary did find Him again and her joy was inexpressible I hope that if you have lost Him it is only temporarily and that you put the effort in to place Him once more at the head of your life. His invitation is always there for all of us to continue or to begin that relationship with him.

SERMON NUMBER 6, “HAVE I REALLY FELT THE WEIGHT?”

The question before us now is a simple one. Have I really felt the full weight of sin in my life? Now the scope of this is not simply feeling what we tend to call “big sins” since all sin is sin even the whitest of “white lies.” Did you know also that in our souls we sing hallelujahs to our Lord but are they pure songs, or are they tarnished hallelujahs, tarnished by not feeling the weight of sin in our lives and thus deluded into not dealing with it?

How often do we truly feel the emotional, mental, or spiritual consequences, or even the desolation that the weight of sin when felt delivers to us? Worse yet do we really feel the weight of those “little” unrepented of sins and attitudes? We really do need to before the scar of them seals our consciences and we forget about them to our eternal cost.

My brethren, have you considered the book of (**Lamentations**)? This book is well named since one who has a broken heart writes it. One who has felt the full weight of sin nationally and personally. Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet” crying for his countrymen and yet too feeling the weight of his own sin as he looks at sins destructive power.

Each of us should be able to both relate to and understand this book purely on the basis that we all sin personally and our country sins nationally. Thus we all need to feel the full weight of sin in both cases as Jeremiah did in his day. We really must feel the full weight of unacknowledged sin in our own lives Lamentations challenges us to do this. To look at our own lives seriously and to

examine it minutely. To name and deal with all sin. To feel the weight of that sin and then ultimately to repent of that sin.

Therefore we are to make personal application and not simply see the book as God's tirade against the sinful Jews of Jeremiah's day. Lamentations is written

under the metaphor of an inconsolable widow who is weeping bitterly because she does feel the full weight of her sin and sees its devastation and desolation. Thus it is written to the soul of all Christians to you and to me as well as all people in the world.

Think for a moment of the very first verse in the book and apply it personally.

How lonely **I SIT.**

You see the very first thing any sin will do is isolate us from our Lord. **(James 1:15)** tells us that sin when it is accomplished brings forth death. This simply means that sin separates or isolates us from God and when that happens we are spiritually alone or lonely and that should be the very first weight we feel when we know we are not dealing with sin; the loss of His presence.

If, however, we do not feel this then really we are in a lot of trouble since what we have is simply a delusion the delusion that God is actually present when He isn't in fact present. We have no relationship with Him but think that we do.

(II Thessalonians 2:11) speaks of this state of being by pointing out that those who do not love the truth (by not obeying the truth) will be sent a deluding influence by God Himself. This is very very scary stuff yet we are to consider this. **To not acknowledge even the tiniest sin and feel its weight is to not love the truth enough to obey it at this point. This should drive us to repent, confess and pray always and to keep a spiritual inventory up to date at all times.**

If you have truly felt this loneliness then you will know what I am speaking about. If you are experiencing difficulty in your relationship to God, His church or the brethren then perhaps it is not a lack of faith in the normal sense and you may need to consider whether there is some undealt with and unfelt sin in your life. Perhaps it is this that is getting in the way of your relationships.

I know from bitter personal experience that whenever I minimised sin, neither felt it nor dealt with it nor felt the loneliness that this should have produced. I was deluded and the songs of my soul were truly tarnished hallelujahs to the Lord's ears and were not acceptable to Him in fact they offended Him so He would not listen to them.

As for becoming a widow well yes we will since we are all part of the bride of Christ and if then we are separated from Him either now or in eternity we become a spiritual widow having no husband since we are “dead.” That is why we must repent and keep cleaning our spiritual house clearing every sin we know about big or little. If we don’t then truly we will be like the inconsolable widow of Lamentations.

The second thing we note in verse 1 is the fact that not only will I be lonely but I will also become a “forced labourer” that is a slave and the slave owner is Satan. **(Romans 6:16)** speaks of this when Paul says: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience you are the slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness.”

Now I am not saying that we deliberately set out to do this, but I am saying that by not realising sin and feeling its weight we become forced labourers of Satan by default. This is why we must really appraise ourselves spiritually in all honesty, humility, and even fear. Sin is so insidious and it bores its way into our soul surreptitiously and sits there working its poisonous virus and if we are not aware of it then it will finally kill us.

Therefore if we do have sin that we have not felt or dealt with then we should be very afraid. Why? Because Satan the slave driver accuses us before God day and night and if perchance there is any sin then that accusation will stand and we will be undone and be forced to live in hell with that accuser and taskmaster. No wonder then we read of the widow in **(Lamentations 1:2)** as “weeping bitterly day and night with her tears on her cheeks and she had none to comfort her.” That is a capsule of eternity if we are not careful in our lives to do a true appraisal on ourselves.

Following on in verse 3, we find that in dwelling in this harsh servitude she finds no rest. Thus until we deal with sin and feel its full weight in our lives then this is our true state whether we know it or not. So then to feel “comfortable” with even the smallest sin means that rest too is a delusion that will lull us into a false sense of security.

Further on in verse 9 we find that “she did not consider her future and therefore fell astonishingly and now had no comforter.” Personally I think that in judgement many that thought they stood or were strong may fall just as astonishingly. But to have no comforter this should put us in mind of David’s psalm of repentance **(Psalm 51)** after his great sin with Bathsheba. In verse 11 David pleads with God: “Do not cast me from thy presence, and do not take thy Holy Spirit from me.”

Now the Holy Spirit is the comforter and if we grieve Him ([Ephesians 4:30](#)) or if we quench Him ([1Thessalonians 5:19](#)) then we send our comforter away and thus have no real comfort at all. Again we have only the delusion that we are being comforted. So again we see how unfelt and undealt with sin robs us of our spiritual comfort. This is why Satan never wants us to look too deep within ourselves.

In verse 10 we see how the adversary Satan stretches out his hand over all our truly precious things. Our soul, our forgiveness, our peace, our spiritual comfort, our relationships with God, the church, and each other. How he robs us of our place in heaven truly he brutalises mankind and of all that is good. This shows us that he does it slowly and ruthlessly and that is why we need to constantly take a spiritual inventory of ourselves in our deepest recesses and root out every hidden sin within us.

Yet in all this seeming gloom in the backdrop of this book there is a ray of bright and wonderful spiritual light. Chapter 3 verses 31-33. “For the Lord will not reject forever, for if He causes pain and grief then He will have compassion according to His abundant loving-kindness. For He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men.” Thus if we acknowledge, deal with, feel the weight and repent of sin in our lives we will have relief and restoration by the mercy of God (3:22-25). This puts us in a right relationship with Him once again.

This is why we really do need to feel the weight of our sins **EVERY SIN** since when it is lifted off us we then know how much it had been hurting and hindering us. Doing this penetrates the cloud of (3:44) which was hindering our prayers. It will open up for us the Lord’s presence, which had been lost to us (4:16). Then the Lord can regard us again as one of His own.

Finally in chapter 5 we have the prayer for mercy and when the repentance is real God will run to welcome us home ([Luke 15:20](#)) in compassion and love. So my brethren look deep within and identify any and all sins still alive inside you, feel their weight and turn in repentance and all the blessings you are missing will be restored. The delusions that are fooling you will be lifted and you will have clear spiritual sight. Plus your soul's hallelujahs will no longer be tarnished but will be pure and refreshing to the Lord.

SERMON NUMBER 7, HAVE I STOLEN WHAT IS CHRIST’S?

Now there’s a question for us have we stolen the Lord’s stuff? If you are like me then you probably haven’t thought much about this question. After all what could we steal that really belongs to the Lord, and if we really could then what

effect would it have on Him and us? I know that I never really gave this question the thought it deserves until I was put in a really tight dark space spiritually (and physically) speaking. This made me re-appraise how I thought about the Lord, and made me think more deeply on this subject.

Take a moment to reflect on the question what do we really own? What can I say is totally mine and therefore I can do whatever I want with it? Now apply this to the really important things. Think about two very important things we have our spirits and our souls. They belong to us right! Well think again.

In ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)) we may be surprised to learn that we do not own our spirits at all. At death the spirit goes back to God *who gave it to us*. So what then does this imply? Simply that our spirit is not ours it is given to us on loan if you will until God calls it back to Himself.

Well then what about our souls since we all have one of those? Well again look at ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)) *“All souls are mine says the Lord.”* Again this implies that our soul like our spirit is given to us for the period of our life and is then called back to God.

Well what about our bodies? You say quickly! Well again they were fashioned by God from dust to house our spirits and our souls. So even our bodies are not ours to do with as we wish. When we become Christians it becomes doubly apparent that this is the case since we read in ([Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). *“Do you not know that your body is **the temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, **whom you have from God** and therefore you are **not your own for you have been bought with a price.**”*

Wow! We have all these things, body, soul, and spirit, ***none of which actually belong to us outright.*** We have been bought with a price (the death of Christ) therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and by doing this we keep our soul safe and our spirit clean. ([I Thessalonians 5:23](#)) sums up the thought for us in these words: *“now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you **entirely** and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul himself also sums it up in ([Acts 27:23](#)) where he uses the phrase *“**the God to whom I belong.**”*

From these thoughts we can see very clearly that we are not the owners of what we very well consider to be ours to do with as we wish. No my brethren, no we are in reality renters, or more correctly stewards of these things and will have to give an account of how we used our bodies which house the soul and the spirit. You see what we do with our bodies determines where the soul will ultimately reside in eternity when it is reunited with the body in the resurrection.

Christ bought all souls when He lay down His life for the sins of the world and having done that He owns every one of them and that is why He and not the Father will judge every person. At the same time, however, He did not take away man's free will. That is one thing that belongs entirely to us. Yet even so if we exercise that will wrongly then there will be consequences both here and in eternity so be careful how you use it.

All of this leads to one grand thought when you consider it. If we use our bodies for the wrong purposes we hurt our souls and our spirits and because all three belong to God we will answer to Christ on how we used His property on earth.

You see Christ really does reserve the right to judge and therefore be given an account of just how His property has been looked after or not according to His instructions (found in His word). If we obey these instructions which include obedience to the gospel then we will have used His property wisely, effectively, and truly. If not then we will give an account of how we misappropriated His property which means in effect that we stole it to use for our own ends and purposes. That needs to be reflected on seriously, we can steal from the Lord in this way.

Therefore one question we need to honestly ask and answer is this. ***To whom do I belong?*** Once we do this it will settle all problems and get us to think before we say or do anything. Not only so but when we really do get to grips with the issue then we can give Christ back His own property to work with. Then He can do wonders with it and with us. Therefore our focus as Christians is simply this: to recognise the ownership of the one who has bought and paid for us.

All souls and spirits belong to Him and since these are housed in our bodies then by implication the body belongs to Him also. Thus we are not our own so let us truly let this concept sink into our hearts and minds so as to totally understand its ramifications.

All of this is simply telling us that we are to remember to ***consecrate Christ's property***. This simply means to give it back to Him so He can work with it as He wishes. It is letting Christ have what rightfully belongs to Him. This in turn is ***Our sanctification*** which is the setting apart of ourselves and what we want. The setting apart of body, soul, and spirit so Christ really can work through us for His good pleasure and not ours.

The Greek word here is *'αγιος* (hagios) which means to separate unto God it also implies the behaviour that results from such a separation. (IThessalonians 4:7), Pure behaviour. (ITimothy 2:15), self-restraint. (Hebrews 12:14), peaceful behaviour. (IPeter 1:2), obedient behaviour. All of this (ICorinthians 1:30), leads

to our redemption. All of the above can be summed up in (Galatians 5:22-23) the fruit of the Spirit. And further in (ICorinthians 13), the fruit of true love.

When we begin our life in Christ we appropriate Him, His salvation, and His word and this is what we must do. Yet think with me for a moment about this. As we grow in these things there needs to come a time when we must proceed to the ownership of Christ, His proprietorship if you like. This happens when as we mature we come to understand what it fully means to belong to Him. We often sing, “Christ is mine,” but we need to progress to “I am His,” (Acts 27:23).

Jesus is our helper this is very true but do we realise that He is (or ought to be) our **controller as well?**

When we give Him His property to work with He can then properly control us since He **is in control**. This is sanctification or consecration of His property. (IICorinthians 5:14) tells us how we are controlled. It is with and by **the love of Christ**. The Greek here is **συνεχω** (sunecho) denoting a uniting and a holding firmly together. Thus the love of Christ controls us by uniting us together with Him and that loves holds us firmly that is it controls us if we let it that is.

This can only happen as we have seen if we give Christ back His property so He can use it and work with it as He wills not as we wish. Thus consecration is Christ taking over His property and using it. Remember that that property is our mind, body, soul, and spirit. Dedication is our part, taking our hands off that which is not ours and handing it over to Christ this is the joint participation the (sunecho) in which Christ’s love can now control our lives.

This then leads us into (Romans 12:1) “I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice acceptable to God which is your reasonable (logical or rational) service of worship.” This is the only logical thing that we can do, recognise His complete ownership of us our entire being.

How the world is so far removed from this concept. We hear it all the time don’t we? “It’s **my body** thus I have the right to choose whether I will keep a baby or kill it by abortion. I can decide if I am male or female and change my gender. I have the right to be gay. It’s **my mind** so I can think whatever I want and thus do whatever I want. I can even choose when I want to die or be euthenased God has no part in it.

How different is in reality however, “all souls are mine, the spirit comes back to Me who gave it, I formed the body, you are not your own at all.” Yet how often as Christians do we forget this and go on and do our own thing? Let us realise that

when we do this we are using stolen property for when we do it will lead us to two significant things.

- (1) (Romans 12:2) “We will not be conformed to this world but will be transformed by the renewing of our minds thus we will be able to prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect.”
- (2) (Corinthians 7:31) “We will live in the world as people who are not engrossed in it.” (Moffat’s translation).

But how are we to be transformed by the renewing of our minds?

(II Corinthians 3:18) gives us the answer. “But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

You see it is not us doing the transforming is it? No it is the Lord Himself and how can He do it? Because we have given Him back His property to work with and when He gets it He will transform us into His image. Now the hymn “All to Jesus I surrender” begins to make sense to us for when we say “Lord I give myself away” we are really saying to Him, “Lord I give you back your property so you can transform me or change me to be like you.”

Yes He really can do wonders when He gets His own property to work with. And the great thing about it is that He will only work with us in love and control us with that love if we are willing to give back to Him our body, soul, mind, and spirit with the willingness to let Him change our vile sinful self. Now that’s worth thinking about deeply don’t you think?

Sermon Number 8 Seasons of the soul.

“Behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared, and the voice of the birds has been heard in our land.”
(Song of Solomon 2:11-12).

Ah yes, spring, the time of new life. New warmth, flowers, and birdsong. Birds’ thanking their creator in song for the winter has passed and warmth and abundant food now arrives for them. Of all the seasons’ spring holds out more than the rest. She holds the promises of renewal, new life, warmth and resurrection. The world is greener, sunnier, warmer, and more inviting after the cold and wet of winter. Everything seems more pleasant and hopeful and the whole world begins to wake and stir withal these promises spring brings to us.

But beware! For spring can also hide a violent side. Storms, tornadoes, thunder and squally winds. Its birth can be quite tumultuous but as it ages it calms down and then the settled days of summer come and all is calm and warmer until the fruit gathering of autumn comes.

We too have our “seasons” physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We need to know and acknowledge them in our lives and we need to have the will to live through them and learn from them. We need to get to know their signs in our lives and so be prepared for when they come rather than let them take our lives over in a negative, soul destroying way. The winter will pass and the spring will come; yet so many choose to stay in the winter of life where it is cold, dark, and rainy with thick fog enveloping their soul and spirit.

Here then is a story of a Christian who went from the springtime of Christ’s love back into the winter of life without Him, living purely for herself again.

She was a bright and bubbly girl; full of energy and verve, vibrant and full of life. Sure she was devious (but what 12 to 14 year old isn’t?) Then at the age of about 14 she changed a little and was baptised into Christ. Even then she seemed still somehow headstrong and self assured but she showed promise and seemed strong in the Lord. Happy and bright she began living in the spring of a new life moving on toward the summer of a settled life in Christ.

As I said though spring has its more violent side and later in her life long, dark, ominous, storm clouds began to appear on her soul’s horizon. As the girl moved into womanhood she began to wander and wobble and become erratic in her Christian walk. Long, dark, ominous storm clouds appeared and the remnants of winter returned to her soul. Lightning flashed from those dark clouds and the thunder rumbled as she slowly turned away from God’s spring into the dark winter of her soul.

During this time of turning there were some calm, warm, and sunny days. But as she got further away from God the days got less sunny and less warm although she never realised it at first. Then there appeared a long white feathery cloud on her soul it looked bright and feathery promising calm and peaceful days. But this was the false cirrus cloud, the one we often see on a calm day it looks benign and peaceful but it actually is a herald of the coming storm.

So she lived under this cloud from around 18 – 25 then finally the thunder began to rumble and the lightning flashed as she drifted further and further away from the Lord and His church. Through all of this, however, she could not get out of her mind where she had fallen from and this always made the storms worse and much more frightening. “What if I die right now?” This was a pressing question during those stormy winter days.

She tried to ease this double mindset with booze, drugs, and relationships and so the cycle of sin was set and the rain of all these decisions poured on her soul with no let up. There was one break and that was when she had her child. This was a day of sun in the midst of the storm in her life. But even that was taken away when she lost the custody of her beloved daughter. She stayed in that winter for a while yet until one day something stirred in her soul.

Now she began to think of the springtime she once knew in Christ she wanted that new life again and she longed to return to the Lord and His church, His people. But as we have said, when winter collides with spring we can have violent storms, wind, rain, and even tornadoes. For this young woman the first collision was that of self loathing and self doubt. "All these things I have done" she thought "Surely God would never forgive me or want me back I am damaged goods I have no value. Then there are the people in the church, if they knew what I did and how I really feel they will not want me either."

This brought on the other lightning flashes. Those were the panic attacks, fears, the spaced out feelings of aloneness and not thinking that anyone understood her, the feelings of alienation and being somehow different from everyone else. Every strange pain brought on fears of cancer or heart attack. If the sun suddenly went behind a cloud she thought she was having a stroke or going blind. These are the fears and thoughts of that winter land. Now during that cold dark winter she had got an abortion and this particularly played on her mind for she knew that this was tantamount to murder. This she "knew" God could never forgive her for and this compounded her fear, confusion, and loneliness.

This last storm then was particularly severe and it ripped at her tortured soul but within this storm were the seeds of spring, the cure of her soul and the return to the Lord and His church. Where before she would try to drink or drug away her pain she now made up her mind to go back to her Lord and began her first faltering steps.

I'll never forget the day I heard that she had been re-baptised. She was older now and had more idea of the commitment she was making I was so happy for her and prayed to God for her to stay strong and up till now she has. (Long may it continue). She is now married and has beautiful children who all come to church with her.

Now the winter has truly passed, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared and the voices of the birds are heard in her soul. Will there be more storms? Sure there will but now they can be handled in faith and with the help of all those who love her in the church.

A lot could be said about this young woman; but I will tell you this. I think she is a very brave and amazing young lady, one who endured the winter and the storms. She faced up to and finally overcame her grief, her inward panic, her guilt and fear and finally come back home. She will be the first to tell you all this was her own doing and that she knew when she left the Lord that a lot of guilt would follow. She also found out that she could not drink her guilt away or hide it within relationships. She could not hide behind the whirlpool of emotions that go with such a life style.

Only a few come back from this and she did and for that she needs to be applauded and celebrated just as the lost boy was in [Luke 15](#) when he came home to his father after “he came to himself.” Remember the father had a celebratory party for him; the elder brother though was less than impressed. I love her for her courage and her honesty she is truly an amazing and brave young lady and I welcome her home.

Her scars will heal, the rain will pass, and the birds will continue to sing in her soul as her spirit heals within her. Yes, the flowers of spring have appeared in her life and now when the storm clouds appears on her soul’s horizon there is something that Jesus said that is relevant to this story and that is this: “Consider the lilies of the field, they do not toil, nor do they spin, yet even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” What is Christ telling us here? He is telling us to *RELAX*.

There will be storms and trials that will come our way, but we are to relax and know that they will pass. After all God looks after the animals and birds and flowers so will He not look after us too especially since we are His children as Christians? He is also telling us to learn to celebrate. Like Song of Solomon says, “the winter has passed, the flowers have come, the birds are singing.’ You have passed from death to life just like the girl in our story. Have then an attitude of prayerful thankfulness and gratitude and live in the celebration of His grace. This leads on to heaven and heaven is a place of celebration, happiness, and peace. So relax, consider the lilies and let the nature of Christ grow in your soul and spirit.

Then the storms of winter and spring will give way to the settled warmth of summer and on to the fruitful harvests of autumn. Thank God for brave women like the one in our story and the brave men also who have come back from the storms. Sure they will be scarred from the battles yet they have looked Satan in the eye and fought back. They lost many battles but they have not lost the war.

In such stories there is hope for others and salvation for those who have come back to the Lord and his church. So instead of castigating them and trying to reinforce their guilt and shame celebrate them as the angels in heaven do by rejoicing in their victory over Satan, self, and sin and their coming home to

Christ. Yes behold. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared, and the voice of the birds has been heard in our land.” Amen!

Sermon number 9 “A Long Journey into Day.”

This journey has its conception in the land of Goshen (**Genesis 45:10**). After Joseph had brought his family from the famine in the land of Canaan. It was here that the children of Israel grew from about 70 people into a great nation. Goshen then can be thought of as the womb for there was comfort and security for the people whilst they were there. The growth of Israel in Goshen is like the growth of a baby in the mother’s womb.

All was well for a time but a new Pharaoh came to power (**Exodus 1: 6-13**) and Goshen became a confining and hard place for the Israelites. Thus they needed to leave if they didn’t they would die there stillborn. So with the hardening of Pharaoh’s attitude against them the process of the birth of the Israelite nation began the labour pains and contractions were beginning to demand the birth just as they do in the birth of any child.

It was, however, to be a slow and painful birth since Israel seemed not to want to really leave the comfort of the womb of Goshen. True Pharaoh did his best to halt the birth; yet many of the Israelites appeared to have assimilated the Egyptian lifestyle and customs and thus did not want to actually leave what they had been used to even in those hard times. They had in a sense given up freedom for the sake of “security” the security of the known over the unknown.

It is significant that the beginning of Israel’s freedom started with two brave Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah (**Exodus 1: 15 – 17**). They refused to carry out Pharaoh’s orders to kill all the male children at birth. These two midwives began the birth out of the womb of Goshen and the journey toward Canaan. It was this that led to Israel’s freedom and changed the history of the world.

Now let us pause here for a moment and look at some of the lessons we can apply to our own lives derived from what we have just looked at. First: there are times in our lives when we feel comfortable with where we are at even though we know it is not good. This can apply to relationships we have formed as Christians with worldly friends or it could be situations we have got ourselves into that are not good for us. We will not leave them even though they hold us back from being all that we could be and we feel somehow secure in them. When we are in such spaces we are like Israel in Goshen; if we do not leave them we will stagnate in our Christian life and finally die.

The application for us is that when we find ourselves in such situations we need to find in us the same courage as those Hebrew midwives and find the strength to leave such worldly situations and things which hold us back and stop us from growing those which in some sense “kill us” before we can grow up.

Often we do not find the strength (or don't want to) let go of old familiar (family or friends) situations. We hang on to them out of insecurity and fear as well as weakness. From this we make compromises we shouldn't make and so we keep what we think are spiritual and emotional securities. Only like Israel we find out that by doing so we lose our true power. Pharaoh held on to Israel and Satan holds on to us. However, in saying that it is done with our permission explicitly or implied and only we can change that for ourselves.

Therefore we can see that we can benefit from these two midwives examples, they did something about the situation. Sometimes, however, we feel so powerless to make the changes we need to that we actually do not even try. We like Israel here passively accept things. One of the greatest errors is that we can accept the lie that says “who I am now is who I will always be.” If we do then like Israel we will become paralysed. When this occurs we truly think we are powerless to change and thus give in to these feelings of powerlessness and at the end do not even bother to try to change them. That is nothing short of perpetual victim-hood and it leads you nowhere.

Notice though too that when Moses came and finally challenged Pharaoh to “Let my people go.” Pharaoh responds by making life even harder for the Israelites. What this does is create the *illusion of failure*. But it is just that, an illusion. These are setbacks along the road to freedom and believe me the devil will provide them in our lives also.

Think of the times you have tried to change things in your own life. When you do there are often very powerful inner voices and outer obstacles that make them seem like they are impossible to overcome. These too are *illusions of failure*. Placed there by the devil and his angels to try and get us to stay stuck. Like Pharaoh of old these inner kings set up a tug of war between our old self and ways and the new self Christ would have us become and the ways in which He bids us to live.

Like Pharaoh our ego can get in the way of change and we begin to stubbornly cling to the old familiar ways and we grow deaf to the cry of our soul. Christ is pleading with us to become free and our soul takes up that same cry but we cling to those old behaviours that keep our souls enslaved and we grow deaf to our souls tears and as a result we begin to suffer inside; sometimes we do not even know what our suffering is about and yet we stubbornly hold on to behaviours and attitudes that are no longer of any use to us.

This in a sense is like the plagues that God sent upon Pharaoh and Egypt for their obstinacy. Every time God sent a plague Pharaoh “relented” for a time. But when things eased and he felt better he went back to his old patterns of obstinacy and unbelief. Again we are apt to do exactly as he did by going back to our old ways as soon as the crisis is past. Our old secure behaviour patterns again snuffing out the tears of our true spiritual hearts longing to be free in Christ. Then another plague comes upon us and we again cry to God for mercy and when He grants it we often just like Pharaoh go back to our old thoughts.

What we need to remember in all of this is that the last plague was death and if we do not listen to the pleading of Christ we too will receive the last plague at the cost of our eternal soul. You see when we finally become imprisoned by sin and unhealthy spiritual choices we begin to get numbed to the danger and then tolerate and endure what will finally kill us. This is what Pharaoh and to a lesser extent Israel did. The real exile in this situation is simply the fact that we learn to endure a bad situation and so will not move from it.

For example: If we neglect our spiritual wellbeing for long enough we will actually become totally unaware of our spiritual hunger. This is like an anorexic that has lost the appetite for physical food by starving herself slowly over a long time. We simply become so disconnected from our true spiritual self and the true deep needs of the soul. Then we stop hearing the cries of our souls. Then we simply adapt to whatever lifestyle that makes us comfortable but which at the same time leaves no place for our spiritual well being.

It is true that our healing can only begin when we acknowledge our pain since what is never acknowledged is never dealt with. Sometimes we really need to connect with the soul’s tears so we can awaken God’s compassion and so heal spiritually. But this reconnection and cry must be genuine and not simply selfish or in self pity.

We must accurately express our feelings and we can only do this by acknowledging and confessing our sins to God (I [John 1:7-9](#)). This in turn frees us from the sin and it also frees us up to live to our full potential in Christ and lines our lives up with God and His word. Our outer life will then match our inner life and free our souls from the bondage it was in during its time in “Egypt.”

Finally we reach the Red Sea and this was the climax for Israel leaving Egypt. They had now reached a real impasse on their journey to freedom. With the Egyptians behind them they knew they couldn’t go back for that meant certain death. But with the Red Sea in front of them they couldn’t go forward either so they appeared to be stuck.

In our own lives we reach times such as this don’t we? We know we cannot go

back to situations and behaviours since they will kill us spiritually. Yet we know too that we can't seem to find a way out of them either. What then can we do when we feel stuck? Well one thing the Bible teaches us for sure is that we are never to give in to anything because of fear. Listen Christ tells us that those who *overcome* are the ones who are saved not the ones who give up or who are afraid to do something (**Revelation 3:21**). The over-comers will sit with Christ on His throne.

What did Israel do at the Red Sea? Well they froze with fear and didn't want to do anything. Moses, however provided the answer for their stuckness in (**Exodus 14:13**); "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today." Then in verse 14 "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent." What is this telling us? Simply that when we seem to be at an impasse in our lives; then we need to trust in the Lord and pray, let Him fight for us while we remain silent.

When we do this we find the strength to overcome all our inner fears, inhibitions, and outer obstacles that previously we thought were impossible to overcome. Then just like Israel of old we cross the swirling "Red Sea" of our lives and proceed with God's grace on to the promised land of heaven.

SERMON NUMBER 10 AND US???

Those who think that they are righteous can never ever stand in the place of the repentant sinner since the two places are by nature mutually exclusive. Remember why Christ came? It was to call sinners to repentance and not to save the righteous.

We have within us the power to repent and this means that the sins we commit are in one sense not our greatest crimes. The greater crime is not to repent of them and turn our lives around. Repentance is within our control in every moment of our lives and only we have the power to make positive changes in our lives at any given moment we choose to; but in order to do so we must seize the "*now*" for "today is the day of salvation." (**II Corinthians 6:2**). Once we fully understand this; *we are always free to change the direction of our lives.*

Satan, on the other hand, will whisper in our souls about the sins of our past with the sole aim of discouraging us from believing that we can really change. By doing this Satan is trying to convince us that our past actually does determine our future. In this we are forever defined by what we have done and not by the changes we have made or the repentance we have shown.

This is a trap we can all fall into and we too can end up defining our brethren this way. A new beginning is not in Satan's thinking at all; but it should be in ours and it should be shown to our brethren.

If this type of thinking is in us then no change is possible and we will not see changes in others and so definition by past sin and not by repentance will always be the standard. I am so glad that Christ does not see it that way for if He did who then could be saved?

In Christ's thinking not only past pain can be healed; but we have also been given His redemptive power to transform our lives and thus *restore what has been broken or lost*. So, two things are given to us, redemptive power through repentance; and forgiveness of the sin.

Let us now back up a bit and say this: "Those who stand in the place of the repentant sinner should have within them the same compassion that they themselves received from the forgiving Christ." If they do not then they stand with those who think they are righteous and thus *apart from* the repentant sinner.

This too is a trap we can so easily fall into and the thinking from this also comes from Satan rather than Christ. This actually negates whatever repentance there may have been since there is no room for forgiveness of others and thus no compassion flowing from one sinner to another. When this occurs then Christ has no forgiveness for the one involved in that mindset. (**Matthew 6:14-15**). Thus we should not negate the forgiveness we received by not accepting the repentance of our brethren.

Think too that when people get into this position then healing becomes impossible on their part. If the other party buys into their position then healing becomes impossible for them also and so both will remain tied to its damaging effects.

The only way out of such an impasse is to have a spiritual awakening as well as a desire to realign our lives to the mind of Christ. To do this we must let go of the "*selves*" we identify with thus making room for an authentic spiritual self. By doing this we shift from being self centred to being Christ centred. This is how we become spiritually aware and when we do then the transforming of our mind becomes possible (**Romans 12:1-2**); so also does the notion of capturing every thought for the obedience to Christ (**II Corinthians 10:3-5**).

You alone can locate that spiritual self within you. Remember that Christ said that the kingdom of God is within *you*. (**Luke 17:21**). That is the reign of Christ within your heart. You learn this by a patient study of His word, a humble

application of that word to your heart, and a reverent compliance to that word. Spiritual wholeness cannot be restored without these things.

To be aware of the need to change is one thing but this by itself is useless. We must not only have the awareness but we must also *decide to act on that awareness*. Thus there is decision and awareness and the two must work in unison for any change to take place. We must be aware of all of our self defeating behaviour patterns and then act on a decision to change them for Christ.

We need to confess our pain, our secrets, our regrets, and our sins to Christ. This way we face our inner truth, our spiritual truth and we reveal our true selves to our Lord and to ourselves and we can then act on it out of that truth. That way we share our *real guilt* with the Lord rather than the neurotic guilt of our own self-centredness. This way we move on from rather than just get over our guilt. This triggers a healthy emotional and spiritual growth and activates a true cathartic remorse.

There does need to be regret and/or grief over our past sins for if there isn't then no repentance has occurred. The barrier to this is of course our hard-bitten defensive pride. This will block our spiritual healing. It is stubborn, self defeating, and satanic which is why it can never begin the process of softening our hearts attitude toward Christ, His word, or our brethren.

Christ and we need to be spiritually and emotionally reacquainted with each other in order to heal this malady. Regret relates to the past but repentance and the resolution to change belong to the present and the future and it is here that we reconnect to Christ and become reacquainted with Him in our lives. Then we must work on not repeating our past sins and patterns of destructive behaviour; destructive to body, mind and spirit.

Repentance stirred by love for Christ is a much more powerful motivator than fear alone. It is true though that a healthy dose of fear (phobos) for Christ is not amiss. It will, however, unite with reverential fear and thankfulness for what He has done for us. When we experience this kind of spiritual awakening our lives will be transformed. If we follow this as a church all our separateness will dissolve in unity and respect for each other in love. This is the love of forgiven sinners to forgiven sinners.

Our closeness to God and each other will then be unleashed in the love of Christ. Then what was wounded in us or what we lacked will become the strength that each member supplies to the body of Christ in loving gratitude and respect for Him and each other.

Each of us has within our souls unique wounds and vulnerabilities which if accepted in the love of Christ may become the means by which we find our special and precious gifts. But this must be triggered by love alone. Beware though for we all have blind spots that keep us attached to our passions and desires and this prevents us from seeing things clearly.

We must therefore be willing to listen to others who may see these things in us and thus be able to help us. We too may be able to help others in this respect and this too is how we encourage and help each other to be the best we can for Christ and also help each other home to heaven. Honesty, trust, and humility are the vital essentials to this and we all must treat each other as Christ would when we do such things. We are to help each other bear these burdens ([Galatians 6:2](#)) and that in the spirit of gentleness. When we do this we restore each others integrity and dignity as Christ would have it. We must therefore learn not only to tell but to do the truth.

I think we can forgive others properly when we have come to truly know the forgiveness of Christ and truly forgiven ourselves. We all have things we have cut ourselves off from, humiliations, hurts, self inflicted and from the hands of others. These things not only isolate us from ourselves but they can prevent us from forgiving and accepting others so they too must be resolved by submitting them to the power of Christ's healing and love. Remember that he creates the healing for every wound within our soul.

We are all "*wounded healers*" of each other in the love of Christ and He is the "*healer of healers*" yet He was wounded for our transgressions. ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). Compassion then is in His nature and it must be in ours also if we are to be truly like Him. Unlike him we wound ourselves and each other and we need to acknowledge that. We also need to know too that the god who wounds because of our sins also has healing in His wings ([Malachi 4:2](#)).

Whenever we go through illness or trauma we are never the same as we were before it happened. The same is true of spiritual illness and trauma. They force us to re-evaluate our lives, they give us new strategies for coping, and they renew our strength and resolve. We, however, need to look for these things within us and pray for the wisdom to use them and always line them up with Christ's word. When we do it is then we unpack the gifts that Christ has given to us so we can help each other through the dark times. First, however, we need to look for them and when we have laid hold of those gifts we are to work with them for the good of His people, the church of the Lord.

We need to ask, "How can we grow from these experiences and how can we use them to honour Christ and help others?"

We must integrate our strengths and our weaknesses and move from judgement to compassion. The great thing about love and compassion is that they change judgement into mercy. And when we finally learn to see each other through the eyes of love and compassion we become healers and not judges. Therefore, look for the good in others, find the good in yourself, and heal the bad with love and repentance.

Have you not wondered how it is that we can be so compassionate even to the “least of our brethren” when they are physically ill or disabled mentally and yet be so cruel when that same one is spiritually hurt or disabled? Often too we have no compassion for our own spiritual maladies why? Do we not see that it was these things that Christ was most concerned with? Should we not therefore be as concerned as He was? Should we not look out for each other in this area too what do you think?

All this takes a spiritual adjustment away from censorious judgement in this area of spiritual illness to a healing compassion. Let us strive to find the seat of compassion within us and we can if we let Christ be fully formed within us as we grow up in Him. We must weave Him into our soul and spirit and mind and then we can accomplish the healing of our souls and the souls of others through His word.

Ah! But how? Well first ***our hearts must be broken***. You see only when our heart is broken can Christ enlarge it. You see Christ is the seeker of broken hearts. But look at us we are too often ashamed to use broken vessels aren't we? Do we realise that Christ did not want the unbroken heart since “they that are whole do not need a physician.” (Matthew 9:12). Then in the very next verse He tells us to go and learn what it meant that He desired compassion and not sacrifice. Do we further realise that this is the comfort of the broken heart and the darkened soul? ***Only the broken can apply for Christ's healing all others don't need it.***

However, as I have said previously, all of this requires humility for humility not only gives us access to Christ's healing but it enables us to experience our brokenness without being self-centred. Remember that when we came to Christ we were all broken and shattered vessels sin sick souls in need of healing and that makes us all equal before God. “There is none righteous, no not one.” (Romans 3:10-12).

If we take the “I” out of thief we don't have one do we? We are but “dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27) yet for our sakes Christ came into the world to heal us and redeem us from Satan back to God. That should take the “I” out of most things and put it in Chr “I”st “I”an don't you think?

You see it is not enough to take the Christian out of the world you must also take the world out of the Christian. Christ has done this for us by taking us out of the bondage Satan had us under. Let us therefore honour, love, and obey him and treat each other with that same love and dignity.

Finally remember too that all of this is predicated on the word of Christ and our obedience to it. We are dealing here with the repentant brethren and not those who wilfully sin. Even so they too need to be reached out to in the compassion of Christ.

SERMON NUMBER 11: AWESOME ARACHNIDS.

Most people seem to stay away from spiders. It seems that these eight legged arachnids somehow inspire fear and loathing, anxiety, and suchlike within the minds of us humans. There they sit dangling on a web their eight beady eyes surveying us from all angles, up and down they look inscrutably at us; it's almost as if they can see right into our souls Those big black glossy ones that come out of the night and scuttle here and there and seem to pop up when we least expect them; they startle us a bit and then disappear behind the fridge or coffee table. Of course the white tail or katipo are to be avoided if we don't want a painful bite while others look fearsome but are harmless.

However, do these agile arachnids deserve our fear and scorn? Well, like all things of this sort, some do and some do not. I think that it is the reputation of the fearsome variety that is placed undeserved on those which would not hurt us at all.

Now then, let's look at this a bit more objectively. Have you ever thought about the wisdom the spider can impart to us? Spiders, you see, have their part too in the creation of God; and can serve a purpose in teaching us some of the things in life that perhaps the creator wants us to learn and apply in our lives. There are, you see, "two books of revelation" the Bible; and the book of nature, and both are written for our learning. So then what can Mrs Arachnid S. Spider teach us?

Firstly: She teaches us patience. Have you ever watched her weave her web? Back and forth she goes; up and down she traverses as she silently spins her home. She does it with great skill and patience, and, if by chance something breaks a strand then she patiently spins another strand and repairs the breach.

This teaches us about our own spiritual home the church. We are to patiently

and lovingly keep it together with the strands of God's Word and when a strand is broken or a breach occurs then we are to gently and patiently mend it and bring the home back together. This is the thrust of [\(Galatians 6:1\)](#).

Secondly: She teaches us to keep balanced and stand in the centre of our home. The centre for us of course is the church itself it should have an integral part in our lives. The centre of the church is Christ our master and redeemer. As Christians the spider teaches us to be patient and balanced in our faith. We are, like her, to use the skills given to us by God wisely. The web itself can also symbolise our faith. It must be woven strongly but gently and attached to its focal point; Christ.

Thirdly: She lives in kings palaces [\(Proverbs 30:28 K.J.V.\)](#). Yes, the humble spider lives with royalty *free of charge*, yet she lives in the highways and byways and the hedges of the common people as well whether they be rich or poor. And; *so do we*. Our home is the Royal Palace of God, "*our citizenship is in heaven*" [\(Philippians 3:20\)](#). The next time, as a Christian, we ever feel that God would not want us, or when we feel down and unwanted, then know this; we are children of a king who is benevolent, kind, and forgiving. Our true abode is in the palace of a king; but for now we live among the hedges and byways frequented by the common people; and our task is to invite them to become the king's children and so eventually live with Him in His heavenly palace.

Thus the spider that lives in king's palaces, directs us to [\(Revelation 3:21\)](#) "They who overcome (says Christ); I will grant to them to sit with Me on My throne; just as I also overcame and sit with My Father on His throne." What a picture that is; us sitting with Christ on His throne! This puts us in mind of the Father taking a picture of His sons and daughters sitting with their elder brother on the king's throne and putting it in His eternal family album. Abraham, Noah, David, Peter, Paul *and us!* So the spider shows us we, truly like her, live both in a king's palace and the common places of the world, how amazing is that?

Fourthly: The spider's web is a dream catcher. That entire silk web wound round a twig or a leaf contains the dreams of the spider for all her children. Have you ever broken one of those thick sticky silken webs? When you do hundreds of the spider's children swarm out and run for the cover of the hedge. Yet that sticky web so patiently wrought houses all her children and all her dreams for them.

This shows us I think how we need to catch the dreams that Christ has for each of us, when He formed His home, the church, for His children. He has dreams for His children and the spider's web is there to show us that we can catch those dreams. The book of [Philippians](#) shows us some of the dreams we need to catch.

(1)“That our love may abound more and more in real knowledge and discernment; so that we may approve the things that are excellent; so we can be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness; which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God” (1:10-11). Wow what a dream! But do we catch it?

(2) Another dream Christ has for us is to be “of the same mind, maintain the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, then to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind we are to regard each other as more important than ourselves. We are not merely to look out for our own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (2:2-4).

Then from (2:5-9), we are to have the attitude of Christ in all our dealings. These are some of the dreams that Christ has for us. Another dream is found in (4:6-9) here He has the dream that we “never be anxious, but that we pray to Him with thanksgiving and make our requests known to him.” His dream is that we have “the peace that guards our hearts and minds.” So we see that Christ has woven for us a dream catcher just as the spider’s web has the dreams in it for her children. Next time you see the spider’s web think of the dreams Christ has woven for us in the scriptures and how He waits for us to unfold them and put them into our lives as a reality. When we do then we can fondly dream of heaven and the king’s palace we can go home to at the end of this life.

The other side of the picture is to see that the spider’s web also says to us is that we are not to let anyone steal the dreams Christ has put before us. The spider’s web may get broken and some of her children be killed but her dreams remain in spite of it. Christ too knows that some of His children will be beleaguered, set upon, persecuted, and killed, but His dreams for us remain in spite of all that. We must not let Satan or the world steal our dreams of heaven which of course is Christ’s dream for us also. So the spider teaches us to hold on to the dreams Christ has for us in His word and never let go of them ever.

Fifthly: Think of the spider as weaving a web between our past, present, and future. That web is as unique as the individual spiders are who weave them. This is the web of our lives, our past which is washed away when we repent and confess our sins; as it was in baptism also. The spiritual consequences of sin are washed away with them. That part of our life is taken away and repaired so we can have a new present and a wonderful future spiritually speaking. That web is constantly being repaired by confession, repentance, and prayer so that we can be in a constant state of grace in Christ. The lesson here is to not become fragmented by looking back to a past that has been repaired by Christ.

We are to “Keep living up to the standard we have attained to and move forward from there and not go backwards.” (Philippians 3:18). We are to do this by “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (3:13).

So once the web of the past has been repaired; stay in the present with an eye to the future goal, heaven. Another lesson here is “not to let ourselves become fragmented by becoming entangled in the webs of others, especially those of the world.” Notice how the spider never gets caught in the sticky threads of her web!

Sixthly: The web of the spider awakens our own spiritual creativity. Have you ever really looked at the spider’s web? If you have then you will know it is a thing of exquisite beauty and design. “Little Missy Spider” truly has a tremendous gift from her creator, and she knows how to use it to create a sculpture of great beauty as well as a home for her children. God gave her a unique gift and she knows how to use it and create her web. How about us? Do we know what our unique gifts are and how to use them?

In (Ephesians 4:7-8) we are told this: “When He (Christ) ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives and, *He gave gifts to us.*” Now we are to find and unpack these gifts He has given to us. Whatever our gifts are, however, they are to be used for the benefit of others, especially those in the church (the web, the home) of the Christian on earth. This is so that we can all attain unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God and all grow into a mature Christian. (Ephesians 4:12-13).

So each one of us has a unique gift that we can use to help each other home to heaven with; do you know what yours is? Have you unwrapped it yet? Are you using it? Yes the spider teaches us that we can use our creative gifts for the purpose of helping our brothers and sisters to grow in Christ and go to heaven.

Lastly we read in (Proverbs 30:28 K.J.V.) that the spider “grasps with her hands.” Spiders do have little hands that grasp hold of what needs to be held in order to spin her web, keep off the sticky threads and build her life’s dream. We are to “lay hold of (grasp) eternal life.” We are to “hold fast to (grasp) the word (I Corinthians 15:2). We are also to “hold on to (grasp) our faith and hold on to Christ.

So we can see that the spider teaches us to “grasp” hold on to these things with our spiritual hands and never let go since these things *are* our lives in Christ. Therefore to let even one of them go will cost us our spiritual life. Just as the spider doesn’t get caught in the sticky threads or traps in her web so we are not to in the world’s web.

We are to “lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us” (Hebrews 12:1). A dire warning is also given to us in (II Peter 2:20-21) “For if after having escaped the defilement of the world by the knowledge of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ; and again become entangled in them and *overcome*; the

Last state for us is worse than the first. For it would have been better, if we had *never known* the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from it.

So then the spider teaches us not to become entangled in the sticky web of Satan and the world; or the web we sometimes weave for ourselves. In some ways the spider has the wisdom of a wise grandmother who is old in the faith and loves her children and grandchildren in Christ She instils in them the faith and knowledge to fulfil their dreams, the dreams Christ has for them. She shows us the patience we need to keep balanced and hold on to our faith.

She lives in kings palaces and in the hedges of the world, she awakens in us the desire to unwrap and use the gifts Christ has given to us as well as our spiritual creativity. So what do you think of the spider now? Next time you see one stifle the urge to kill a benign one then stop and consider the lessons this humble awesome arachnid has taught us and pass her knowledge on to others with love and compassionate patience and understanding, especially to our fellow Christians, our spiritual family in Christ.

