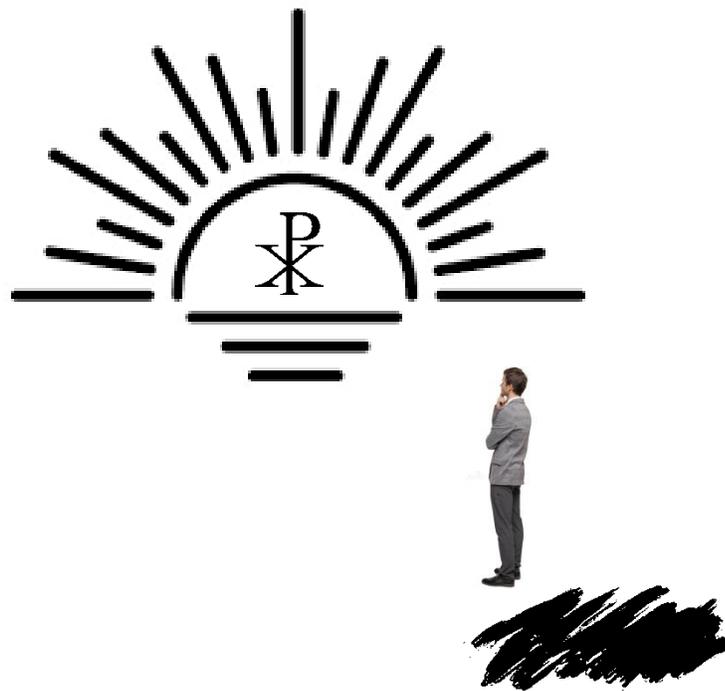


BASKING IN THE SUNSHINE OF GOD'S LOVE

A Study on the More Perfect Way from 1 Corinthians 13

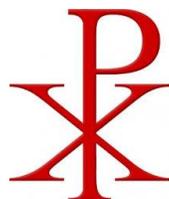


1 Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth . . .

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Basking in the Sunshine of God's Love

Version 1.0



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Preface

The Greatest Thing I Know

◆ A man once asked the theologian Karl Barth, “What is the greatest thing you have ever learned in life?”

He replied, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Amen!

When I was younger, my mother used to tell me, “Play in the sunshine.” She wanted me to enjoy the day, but be safe; be happy and not negative. Thus, this brief is about “Basking in the Sunshine of God’s Love.”

John Piper reminded us that God is never more glorified than when we delight in Him.

So, let’s begin this delightful journey.



God is Love

1 John 4:7

◆ 1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

The NT teaches us that “God is;” that He is the self-existent One who is separate from His creation as compared to gods that do not exist.

It also teaches us that “God is able” of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Matthew 3:9);

- that “God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29; Galatians 3:1);
- that “God is true” (John 3:33; 2 Corinthians 1:18);
- that “God is spirit” (John 4:24);
- that “God is manifest” in the heavens (Romans 1:16);
- that “God is able” to make a *man* stand” (Romans 14:4).
- that “God is faithful “ (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13);
- that “God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).
- that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 32:22);
- that “God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30);
- that “God is no respecter of persons”(Acts 10:34);
- that “God is holy” (1 Corinthians 3:17);
- that “God is faithful “ (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13);

- that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33);
- that “God is good” (1 Timothy 4:4);
- that “God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love” (Hebrews 8:10);
- that the Lord Jesus is God; that to speak of God, one must think of His Son, the only begotten Theos (John 1:18).
- that “God is love” (1 John 4:16).

He loves us not because of who we are but because of Who He is – a God of love. He loves us not because we are good, but because He is good; not because we are wonderful, but because He is wonderful.

God loves because it is in His character to do so. When 1 Corinthians 13 describes love, it is really describing the character of God’s love; and, this is how we are going to interpret love at this chapter – love is a description of God’s character for He is whatever we need Him to be

We are dependent on Him for everything; yet, He has need of nothing. From this God who needs nothing, we get everything. He is the well that never runs dry even though deserts stretch for miles.

Enjoying God’s Love

Romans 5:5

◆ **Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**

A friend expressed his aggravation about a series of sermons in his church. In asking him why he felt this way, He explained, "I am tired of being chewed out every Sunday."

Immediately, I knew exactly what he meant.

In an effort to make a church better, preachers often tell congregations how bad they are and what they need to start doing to be better. The message is do, do, do.

Some feel that if they beat the sheep enough, they will improve; that the more they yell and holler, the better the congregation will be.

Unfortunately, too many want to sound like a freight train going through a tunnel.

In my friend's case, he felt beat up and unloved. No man can live without love. We can survive without nice houses and fancy cars, but who can live without knowing someone cares for their soul? This man needed to be directed to the love of God:

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

Next to holiness, love is the most beautiful flower in God's garden of virtues – a virtue men can enjoy. But, in truth God has no outstanding virtues because all virtues in perfect balance with one another.

Let's consider God's love and how much He loves us from I Corinthians 13.

You can glorify God in your life simply by enjoying God's love for you. He is the sunrise that warms the soul and sheds light for the day.

The More Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 13:1

◆ 1 Corinthians 12 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

God gave men spiritual gifts to build up the church (chapter 12), but there is a more excellent way to change men for the better and that is through charity.

The King James translators translated the word “love” (agape) as “charity” because *charity is love in action*. God’s love is a symphony written before time — every note composed for our hearts.

Love v. Charity

The term “love” can mean anything men want it to signify, whether it be romance, or strong feelings of attachment to something, or the desire for food.

Thus, the KJV translators chose the term “charity” because it expresses hands-on benevolence; soup kitchen labor; and, mother-like patience with a crying, hungry baby.

Paul discloses the fact that without charity, we are nothing but clanging, crashing, banging symbols in a John Philip Sousa marching band – the sound is spectacular, but adds nothing to the man or his service to humanity.

His love is there not there to dazzle us with power, but to delight the soul.

Am I Something or Nothing?

I Corinthians 13:2-3

◆ 2 And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Paul uses the literary “I” to express thoughts that apply to all of us. Using the pronoun “you” sounds too preachy.

The Greek word for “nothing” (*oudeis*) means “worthless” or “of no value” or “having no prospect of changing into something of value; that is, an item that is worthless, empty, cheap, vain, null, flawed, and no-good, or bad.

The opposite of “worthless” in Greek is the word *axios* which refers to something worthy, deserving, capable, able, or meritorious.

Q: Am “I” nothing or something; valuable or worthless?

If we are self-centered and only talk about ourselves we are probably worthless. Self-centeredness is a look in the mirror that concludes he is the Sun and that everything revolves around him.

If we spend our time expressing charity to others, then we are valuable. If we are like a fire, we destroy everything in our path; if we are a river, we refresh everything touching our channel. His love is a flame that warms the soul without burning — steady, sacred, and sustaining.

Oh, the wonder of the Apostle’s striking illustrations!

Who wouldn’t want to have the gift of prophecy with the right answer to every problem? Who wouldn’t want to have faith that could move mountains or poverty or disease or death from the path men walk?

St. Paul with his exceptional reasoning, problem-solving skills, and cognitive abilities combined with the sensitive, tenderness of a butterfly clearly pens the wonder of geniuses without compassion.

Love without compassion is like a vulture circling the weak; like reducing men to cogs in a machine; like stripping a homeless person of their only coat leaving them without warmth and comfort; like a carcass picked clean by greed; like a check without a signature; like a whisper in a storm; like a paper towel buried in the dirt; like a coin made of brass or aluminum.

With all his masculine energy and prophetic knowledge, St. Paul teaches that coveting spiritual gifts without love, one is as worthless as a shadow at midnight; that without charity, the most gifted among us is nothing but noise, a clang, a bang boom bah; that is, a zero, zilch, nada enchilada.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Marshaling all his manly, soldier-like skills, the apostle makes a personal application – perhaps hyperbole or perhaps a hypothetical act of devotion like surrendering his precious all to feed the poor or to resign his body to the flames to save others.

These acts could be done out of resignation, fanaticism, or duty . . . but, if done without charity, there is no eternal gain . . . no temporal profit . . . and no return on the ultimate investment; that is, *noble actions* must be combined with *noble intent* -- the opposite of *mens rea*.

For “without charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.” Thus, actions without love are like thunder clouds without rain; like a dam breaking under subterranean groans; like a truck crashing with crate-loads of chickens.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk **worthy** of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . .

God is patient with you

1 Corinthians 13:4 Charity suffereth long . . .

◆ The English word for “suffereth long” comes from the Greek word *macrothumia*. It literally means “loooooong suffering.” We get the term “patience” from this word. It is the ability to count down before blasting off; the ability to stand in line without complaining; the ability to turn quarry frustrations into stepping stones and the weeds of hardship into a garden of happiness.

Have you ever considered how patient God is with you?

The English word "patience" originates from the Latin word "*patientia*," meaning "the quality of suffering or enduring without complaint."

The Oxford Dictionary says patience is, “The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.”

God is **not** an impatient “cry baby” erupting like a volcano, pounding spoons, squawking like a chick, and throwing bibs on the floor because dinner isn’t served on time. He doesn’t throw a maelstrom of childish fury in the form of smoking tantrums when we fail to serve Him.

He is more like a spider weaving its web: delicate, deliberate, and persistent; like a glacier carving landscapes slowly, silently, grinding down rock faces in the human heart; like the moon that waxes and wanes in its cycles never losing its rhythm; like dormant seeds waiting for the

right conditions to trigger the quiet embryo inside to begin growing its radicle downwards and its plumule of life upward to search for sunlight.

One of His titles is “the God of patience and consolation” (Romans 15:5) – a title revealed following St. Paul’s discussion on the interpersonal conflicts between Jewish and Gentile believers in their struggle to be likeminded in Christ in relation to matters of conscience.

We are trained to perform in order to be accepted. Because we are impatient with others, we think God is impatient with us. Seeing ourselves as not doing enough, we believe God is not happy with us. Because we erupt with red-hot lava and the fury of smoke when we don’t get our way, we think God is a dangerous, hidden power beneath a tranquil facade ready to explode and crush us with red-hot ambers.

We speed down the highway, honk the horn in traffic passing slower cars, rush from store to store, anxiously watch the clock, and lose our cool when meetings are not on time. But, our Lord is not like this. He is patient towards us. He is not in a rush; not in a hurry bobbing His head up and down to see if the line is moving. Moreover, He does not tap His fingers nervously on a desk when we flunk His course on patience. He does not turn red and blow a fuse when we fail.

He is the God of patience Who is loooooong suffering toward us.

Patience is different than mercy in that the latter shows goodness to the those who are weak. But patience shows mercy toward those who are wrong; that is, God is not only patient with us when we are puny, but when we are prostrate; when we struggle, and when we crumble.

- Peter tells us that God “waited” in the days of Noah. One hundred and twenty years the LORD endured the rebels that neglected and taunted Him (2 Peter 3). St. Paul tells us He endured with much patience the “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction” (Romans 9:22).

- He was patient with Elijah when after his victory at Mt. Carmel when fell into a state of depression over Jezebel's threat to kill him (1 Kings 19).
- He was patient with Jonah's rebellion against Him. Further, He gave the Ninevites 40 days to repent under the preaching of his bewildered prophet.
- Our Lord was patient with Jeremiah during his crisis of faith and temptation to resign his fruitless ministry (Jeremiah 15).
- Jesus was patient with a "faithless and twisted generation."
- Our Lord was patient with the disciples of John the Baptist when they went to query Jesus about whether He was the expected Messiah (Matthew 12).
- Jesus was patient with Peter when he couldn't grasp the meaning of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.
- Our Lord was patient with the Scribes and Pharisees who sought to trap Him.
- He endured the suffering on the cross in order that we might be saved from the penalty of our sins.

Consider again how patient God is with you.

Have you ever watched a little girl thread a needle? As she misses the eye of the needle, aren't you tempted to take that needle and thread it yourself? But, God is not impatient with you. He waits for you to seek Him; He waits for you to grow in your knowledge of Him; and, He waits for you to obey Him. He knows there is value in struggling and that you would never grow in Christ-likeness if He interrupted that process. In all your struggles, God is loooooong suffering toward you!!

Hurry is the sin of our age. It is like carrying a backpack of invisible stones; like an anchor to the soul.

We are in a hurry to grow up; in a hurry to eat; in a hurry to go to work; in a hurry to come home. Hurry, hurry, hurry! This accelerated, hasty life damages our soul and prevents us walking with the God of Patience, the God of Hope, and the God of Peace.

Remember the old Sunday school song,

“Have patience, have patience, Don’t be in such a hurry,
When you get impatient, you only start to worry, Remember,
remember that God is patient, too, And think of all the
times when others have to wait for you.”

Robert E. Lee said to his son:

“Duty then is the sublimest word in the English language.
You should do your duty in all things. You can never do
more. You should never wish to do less.”

If we do nothing but our duty in life, then we have succeeded We have the time to make the bed, clean the floor, do dishes, and chores. Let us like the Lord “be patient! Don’t be in such a hurry.” Let us do our duty in all things and be patient doing it.

Patience is the bridge between chaos and order; between sloppiness and excellence; between a D or an A in class; between satisfactory and a job well-done.

See more of God’s patience with you from these texts:

Psalm 86:15 "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness".

Lamentations 3:22-23 "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness".

Isaiah 30:18 "Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him."

2 Timothy 2:24 "And the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil."

Hebrews 6:13-15 "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." And so, after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised."

Romans 15:5 "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:"

Psalms 40:1 "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned and heard my cry".

God is kind toward you

1 Corinthians 13:4 . . . Charity is kind

◆ The Greek word for "kind" is *chresteuomai*. It means "to show one's self mild" to be self-restrained and gentle. It is the opposite of using masculine force to deal with a matter.

In Old English 'kyndnes' meant courtesy, noble deeds, or the quality of being kind. Kindness is like a warm embrace on a winter day; a ray of sunshine behind dark clouds; a bridge over troubled waters that helps the feeble across raging streams; a candle that offers hope when everything seems dark and bleak; a garden in bloom that delights the eyes and

pleasures the smell; like a soft pillow after a strenuous day; like a ripple in the pond that reaches out and touches everyone with the energy of life.

- The Lord was kind to pregnant Hagar by providing her water in the desert due to her hasty flight from Sarah (Genesis 16);
- The Lord was kind to Jacob in protecting him from his irate brother upon his return to the holy land.
- The Lord was kind to Tamar after her incest with Judah by giving her twins and including her in His genealogy (Genesis 37: Matthew 1).
- The Lord was kind to the grumblers of Israel in the wilderness by providing them water, shade, and quail to eat (Numbers 11-13).
- The Lord was kind to timid Gideon by giving him swift and easy victories over his enemies (Judges 6-8).
- The Lord was kind to bereaved Naomi by giving her an exceptional, loyal daughter-in-law, Ruth.
- The Lord was kind to Hannah by healing her infertility and giving her a great son named Samuel.
- The Lord was kind to Elisha by giving him a double portion of the Spirit of Elijah.
- Our Lord was kind to lepers, Samaritans, and the outcasts of Israel.
- Our Lord was not only kind to the newlyweds at the joyful wedding in Cana, He kindly attended the sorrowful funeral of Lazarus at Bethany.
- He was kind to the woman at the well by protecting her secrets from 12 curious men.
- He was kind to Pilate by giving him a gentle, thought-provoking rebuke: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were

given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11).

St. Paul invites us to, "Behold the goodness and severity" of our Lord (Romans 11:22). Jesus is both tough and tender; a man of steel and velvet; a man of muscle and compassion. Kindness is the boutonnière on His Rabbinical robe – a testament to His humanity and warmth. Likewise his muscular endurance of a 40 day fast sported His manly vigor and moral resolve.

Kindness listens rather than interrupts; helps carry groceries for the elderly; feeds a hungry, stray animal; writes addresses on envelopes deliberately, and neatly so as not to make the postman swear; lets go of petty resentments that poisons relationships; picks up trash on the sidewalk that is not theirs; rejoices in the gift of friendship even though kindness is often unappreciated.

Kindness is the ability to show tenderness and compassion to those who may be rough and burly . . . not able to repay us with thankfulness . . . or even render a smile. It is the ability to show mercy when everything in us wants to be rough and gruff.

Do you have people in your life who are irritating and mean-spirited? If you are above ground, you do.

I know of a collegiate wrestler who carried a box of nails in the front seat of his truck. When an oncoming car neglected to dim its lights, he would grab a handful of nails and throw them out the window. God is not like this. Though it is His duty is to judge evil, judgment is called his "strange work" (Isaiah 28:21 used 2x). It is kind of like spanking your child. You hate to do it, but you have to in order for the child to learn.

One time when General Robert E. Lee was fleeing from advancing Yankee troops, he dismounted his horse and calmly walked over to a nearby tree, picked up a baby bird, placed it gently back in its nest, walked back to his

horse, mounted it, and fled like lightening to avoid being hit by thundering musket fire. In this act, Lee was so much like the Savior.

Dr. Hunter McGuire, Stonewall Jackson's personal physician during the Civil War, noted about Jackson, "As I look back on the two years that I was daily, indeed hourly, with him, his gentleness as a man, his great kindness, his tenderness to those in trouble and affliction . . . impressed me more than his wonderful prowess as a great warrior." Can't you say the same about Christ in His dealing with you?

At a wedding in Cana, the Lord Jesus used his power to provide a buttery wine to a poor bride and groom. Though days before He refused to use His power in the wilderness to provide necessary bread for Himself, He did not hesitate to use his power to provide luxuries for others.

But, it is better than this! Not only did our Lord give a good gift, he gave extravagantly. If each water pot at the Wedding of Cana contained between 20-30 gallons of water, we are talking about 150+ gallons of the finest wine – wine that could have sold for over two shekels a quart. Our Savior is not only kind, He is exceedingly generous.

Christ is good, the greatest good, and the standard of good. He is good during good times and bad times; during days of prosperity and days of poverty; during moments of tranquility and moments of adversity; in seasons of fitness and in seasons of sickness; in matters of peace and in matters of war.

He is kind to all His creatures, great and small, rich and poor, young and old (Psalm 119:68). His common grace causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He gives men all good things to enjoy. The "goodness (hesed) of the Lord endureth all day long."

God never does wrong and He injures no man; that is, nothing negative can diminish, derail, or disrupt the engines of His kindness.

If He withholds something from us, it must be for a greater good. At every moment in our lives, He is causing “all things to work together for good.” What a Savior!

Learn more of God’s kindness from the following texts:

Isaiah 54:8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord your Redeemer.

Isaiah 54:10 Though the mountains be shake and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Ephesians 2: 6-7 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

God does not envy you

1 Corinthians 13:4 . . . charity envieth not . . .

◆ The Greek word for “envy” is the word *zeloo* which means “to boil with anger, jealousy, or hatred.” In a good sense it refers to a precious energy to preserve something precious. In a bad sense it refers to a hidden resentment of another person’s looks, success, status, or wealth.

The Old English word for “envy” has the sense of “hostility, enmity.” It comes from the old French *envie* (noun), *envier* (verb), from Latin *invidia*, from *invidere* ‘regarding a malicious grudge from in- ‘into’ + *videre* ‘to see’.

In the English culture envy is associated with the color green -- the sickly pale color of bile. Shakespeare called envy a "green eyed monster" eager to devour the merits of another.¹

The idiom "to burn with envy" applies here. The phrase means to feel an intense, burning jealousy or resentment because someone else has something we want, such as possessions, talents, or success. Jealousy is a wildfire in the heart; a shadow in the soul that grows darker as the light shines brighter; it is like a parasite that eats a man's gut from the inside or like heartburn and the over production of bile; like a coiled snake – hidden, ready to strike, full of venom.

Envy is an ulcer caused by the inflammation of the "wish" bone. It is a green tendril vine smothering its host: a key with no lock; a thorn apple or stinging nettle that causes rashes on the skin; a broken mirror exposing cracks in the soul; a poisonous snake slithering unnoticed in the garden of one's soul; a memory pickpocket stealing good thoughts about others in one's mind; like a rumor with legs walking quietly stealing trust as it plunders the heart.

Love looks through a telescope; envy looks through a microscope. Envy wants; charity gives; envy frowns, but love smiles; envy is self-centered, but love is selfless, giving, and considerate about the needs of others.

The companions of envy are jealousy, anger, bitterness, theft, and even murder. The opposite of envy is generosity, comfort, confidence, contentedness, and benevolence.

¹ The most famous "jealous man" in Shakespeare is Othello -- the source of the famous phrase, "the green-eyed monster" which he uses to describe jealousy. Othello was a general who is manipulated by his ensign, Iago, into believing his wife, Desdemona, is unfaithful. The play Othello is a tragedy about jealousy's destructive power. Iago is also a man green with envy (Google AI).

Though we live so much better than the Savior, our Lord has no envy towards us.

- Most of us are born in clean, sterile hospitals with medically trained doctors attending our every need, but Jesus was born in a stable where his first crib was a feeding trough.
- We have huge air conditioned homes with plush couches, dream cloud mattresses, double garages, and green-manicured lawns. But, Jesus said, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nest, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head.”
- We have heated homes with electric lights, refrigerators, automatic air conditioning, dish washers, indoor plumbing, washing machines, coffee makers, and the convenience of gas heating, but Jesus rested indoors under candle light or outside by an evening fire.
- We have closets full of shirts, warm socks, cotton trousers, and jackets, but Jesus only had one garment – a robe that was stripped from Him.
- We travel in nice comfortable, air conditioned cars with automatic steering, windshield wipers, electronic ignition, and stereos; and, if forced to walk we put on Nike Gel tennis shoes for stability, support, and comfort. But, Jesus traveled thousands of miles in a pair of crude sandals on dirt roads under the eastern sun and Levantine winds. Only once did he ride on the back of a donkey to Jerusalem’s temple – not on a white, saddled stallion, but a common ass.
- We enjoy global cuisines: French pastries; Mexican goodies like tamales, enchiladas, and tacos; Chinese wonders; Texas size steaks; Southern Bacon with grits; and double bleu cheese burgers that melt in the mouth. But, our Lord’s diet was limited to wheat-barley breads and a small variety of fruits and vegetables common to the Mediterranean.

- Many modern Christians are baptized in clear, clean, heated water of a church baptistery, but Jesus was baptized in the cold, muddy waters of the Jordan River.
- Christians wear beautiful, silver crosses as necklets, but Jesus lugged a heavy, splintery, wooden cross down the Via Dolorosa all the way to Calvary.
- Very few of us will die without morphine, but the Savior had no opiate in His death.

Not only does He not envy us for our luxuries, he gladly and richly provides these niceties for our comfort and happiness. Nothing He does is self-serving. Everything He does is motivated by benevolence and love. Good can come out of the trials that He sends our way when we accept Providence by faith (Romans 8:28).

The longer we live the more we realize that our Lord has treated us better than we deserve . . . that all our suffering was necessary to perfect the inner man.

Knowing that He is not envious and that He is an unselfish Savior, we can boldly ask the Lord to supply our needs, even conveniences for us to enjoy. Because God loves us we know He will gladly supply all the necessities of life for our comfort and enjoyment. Moreover, if He withholds something from us, we know it must be for a higher good. Believest thou this?

Consider God's lack of envy and His generosity from the following texts:

Exodus 20:4 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Note: the Ten Commandments reflect the character of God.

Psalm 50:10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Psalm 50:12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

Matthew 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us,

In truth, God is sufficient in Himself and does not envy you!

God does not boast about Himself to you

1 Corinthians 13: 4 . . . charity vaunteth not itself . . .

◆ The English word “vaunt” is a translation from the Greek word *perperpeuomai* meaning “to boast, brag, or be conceited.” Its root (*perperos*) means “vainglorious” which refers to those who play the braggart on stage to an audience of spellbound fools.

The English word “vaunt” comes from the old French word *vanter*; from late Latin *vantare* which is based on Latin *vanus* which means “vain or empty”.

Vaunt is “vainglory” which is like a painted mask—bright on the surface, but hiding emptiness beneath;” like a balloon with nothing but hot-air holding it up; like a crowing rooster strutting around with its cock a doodle doo at dawn; like an urban cowboy that is all hat and no horse, all sizzle and no steak, all smoke and no fire; and, like a big fish in a small pond.

The word "boast" originates from the Middle English word "bosten," which came from the Old Norse "*bōsta*," meaning to brag or show off. Can't you picture in your mind a 250 pound Viking holding a stag of beer in a mead hall boasting about his stolen treasures?

Someone said, “It is a good thing that men do not have to pay taxes on what they think they are worth. They’d be broke.” Boasting makes noise to be noticed but leaves no room for the accomplishments of others; like fireworks in the daytimes; singing in the shower; and a paper crown – impressive until the rain comes.

Jesus, however, is not a braggart strutting around on stage like a rooster crowing for the crowd. Our precious Lord is more like a mountain that towers above the landscape remaining still and silent. Though the Savior is above men, He speaks to them in a small, still voice. He is like a a giant redwood with deep roots; like bamboo that bends but does not break; Like the ocean underneath the waves; deep and vast, yet silent; like a candle that burns its own resources so others can see; like the bow of a fruit tree bending low so the hungry can reach its pomes; like a river of water seeking a low places to rest; like rich, fertile soil that supports the grains of life yet stays beneath everything; like a servant washing the feet of his disciples and putting others first.

Though He is God and has much to boast about, He is meekest man that ever walked the earth. He is like a sunflower that quietly turns toward the sun never demanding attention; like a war horse at rest but ready to charge; like a dam that holds back water where its strength is in restraint and control and not in the flow; like a lighthouse in the fog that doesn't shout its importance but simply stands firm guiding others to safety; like a silver bell that chos es silence until needed; like a sword in a sheath that is present but not flaunted.

Though He created heaven and earth, calmed the storm, healed the sick, and raised the dead, He does not boast about His miracles on earth to us.

Moreover, He is such a humble Teacher He does not force us to learn about His great power and grace. Knowledge of Him must spring from our own desire to know him and not from a heavy-handed ultimatum with whip in hand for us to plow through books to learn about His greatness –greatness in power; greatness in accomplishments; greatness in holiness; greatness in love; and greatness in mercy!! Selah!

The success of achievers not only goes to their head, but also to their mouth. But, not so with the Lord!

- He was God on earth, yet only a handful of people knew about His unique birth.
- He is a member of the royal family of David, yet he was raised in the hillbilly country of northern Galilee with a reputation of crudeness – Nazarenes were to Israel what hicks and rednecks are to Americans: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46).
- He is a king, but He was known as a carpenter's son.
- He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, yet only possessed one article of clothing – a robe.

- He is God Almighty, the Son of God, but was vilified as a half-breed “Samaritan.”
- During his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus petitioned the soldiers, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go" (John 18:8).
- He commanded angels, yet forbid any of them from rescuing Him from Calvary’s cruel fate.
- He could have died a martyr’s glorious death, but He accepted the shameful fate of a common Roman criminal – hanged on a cross.

Do you feel as insignificant as a maggot? God loves small creatures like you and is not ashamed to be your God. If God loved Jacob who was called a worm (Is. 41:14), surely he loves you.

God is humble for you

1 Corinthians 13:4 Charity is not puffed up

◆ The Greek word for “puffed up” (phusioo) means “to inflate or blow up.” It is strongly associated with pride, arrogance, and conceit – kind of like a peacock in a room full of mirrors or a rooster crowing because he thought he made the Sun come up.

Being “puffed up” makes a man artificial; humility makes a man real; like a balloon rising in the air, it looks impressive, but it is only takes a pin to make it burst.

Think of our Lord’s humility – a tapestry delicately woven into every action from His birth to His death.

He humbles himself to reveal Himself to you, to save you, and to walk with you.

Like a rose in the garden, He doesn't seek applause. He is the "Rose of Sharon" adding beauty to the world without seeking attention for Himself (Song of Songs 2:1).

Our Lord is the only man who could choose his destiny.

- He was so humble, he was born in Bethlehem, the smallest city in Israel; moreover, he was not born in Jerusalem, Israel's capital or Rome, the "greatest" city in the Roman Empire.
- He chose poor parents, Joseph the carpenter and Mary a poor woman.
- His first crib was a manger -- a feeding trough from where the herdsman poured grain for the sheep and goats to eat.
- His first miracle was revealed to a poor couple in Cana where he turned water into wine.
- He did not brag about turning water into wine, of chasing the covetous Pharisees out of the temple; of healing the blind, or raising the dead. The Spirit simply recorded the facts without preaching, boasting, or bragging.
- His preferred associates were not members of government but tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners.
- He was so poor he had to borrow a penny to give an illustration.
- At His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the city of kings, He rode on a donkey and not in a four horse chariot.
- His only piece of clothing was a robe . . . and it was stolen and gambled for by Roman soldiers.
- He was so humble that when He was mocked as a "Samaritan." When slandered, he remained silent. Besides, He loved the Samaritans. When Jews sought to discredit Jesus by accusing Him of having a demon, He had to respond to defend His ministry.

- He could have chosen to die a hero's death; rather, he died as a common criminal on a cross; that is, He chose to die a shameful death on the cross.
- He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Our Lord was and is the most humble man that ever lived.

But, the great challenge of our Lord's humility is that we have to shut up, wipe the proud smirk off our face, and grovel in the dirt to walk with Him. Though humble, he demands none of this from men.

C.S. Lewis said, "Humility is not thinking thing less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."

The great lesson for us is to be humble or stumble.

God behaves mannerly toward you

1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity . . . doth not behave itself unseemly,

◆ The Greek word of "unseemly" (*aschemoneo*) means to act unbecomingly, indecently, curtly, discourteously, or barbarously.

The Pulpit Commentary says the word refers to, "vulgar indecorum . . . alien from love, as having its root in selfishness and want of sympathy;" the opposite of which is to maintain a kind decorum; to behave admirably with honor and restraint.

A perfect gentleman, Jesus behaves properly, mannerly, respectfully and decently toward us; that is, He does not force His law-order on us. His will must be accepted freely, willingly voluntarily by men.

The Scriptures inform us that God is not rude, disrespectful, crude, or boorish; that Jesus is a refined Prince -- a sharp guest with manners and dignity. He is the oak tree in the storm—deep rooted, standing tall, sheltering those beneath its branches.

He never shamed his disciples or embarrassed them with rude, impolite, disgraceful behavior. He is like oil for an engine that keeps it running smoothly; like a well-tuned violin in an orchestra blending harmoniously without overpowering the symphony; like a garden path guiding others to see lovely flowers in full bloom. He is the pleasing parkland offering peace and beauty to all who enter.

Americans have notorious poor table manners. We are an embarrassment to the British and considered unsophisticated by the Chinese. We slurp our soup, rest our elbows on the table, chomp our cookies, spill our salt, and belch after a good meal. And while all this slurping, chomping, spilling, and burping can be seen as quaintly humorous, we are no longer living in little wooden shacks in the Ozarks where we prop up our feet on the table and scoot aside to make room for 19 cats, dogs, and pigs.

It was said of Stonewall Jackson, “Jackson’s personal character was absolutely without blemish. His habits were the manliest that a Puritan could wish, his honor clean, and his courage superlative; while as a gentleman in expression and action, he had no superior.” (Stonewall Jackson’s Book of Maxims, p. 94).

General Lee had one rule at Washington College: “Every student must learn to be a gentlemen.” (The Maxims of Robert E. Lee, p. 50).

Being a gentlemen to Lee was never more tested than when the strong have power over the weak, magistrates over the citizen, employers over the employed, the educated over the unlettered, the experienced over the novice, and the clever over the silly—the forbearing or inoffensive use of power and authority reveals the gentleman in pure light (p. xxi).

“doth not behave itself unseemly” implies propriety. The word “proper” means suitable to a purpose. Propriety stays within a purpose. This is another way of saying that our Lord is a man of honor in His dealings with us. He has absolute power over us, yet He is not harsh or course with us; not a tyrant or a dictator; nor is He crude and rude. He does not abuse His power or position. As Lord, he behaves like a king. As a Savior, He is always kind and tender towards His flock. As our Head, He is always stately. He never raises His voice when a quiet word will do. In all His dealings with us, He is always the Royal Gentleman.

Our Lord is a well-tuned violin in a noisy room. He doesn't shout to be heard, and His presence hums with peace and elegance. His words are measured, his gestures deliberate. In a world full of clamor and chaos, He is like a bow gliding across strings offering melodies to the weary.

Our Lord showed humility and respect to all people. He modeled the Golden Rule ("Do to others what you would have them do to you") including the virtues of honesty, forgiveness, and obedience to authority.

- Jesus' nobility included showing compassion to widows, to the hungry, to the sick, to the blind, to lepers -- “for He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”
- He showed respect for his earthly parents at age 12 even though he had to be about His Father's business.
- He graciously, respectfully, and almost imperceptively corrected His mother when He entered His ministry as Messiah and not the son of Mary in John 2.
- He broke all Jewish norms when he touched the leper and healed him — a masterpiece on compassion and grace for the whole world to see (Matthew 8).

- He displayed manliness and righteousness in defending His Father's House from the Jewish market places of thieves where all "boker tovs" (good mornings) are warm ups for fleecing the flock (John 2);
- He managed Himself with integrity to Nicodemus, a high ranking official of the Sanhedrin, when asked a question in secret (John 3);
- He exhibited, humility, propriety, and compassion to the woman at the well – a woman with many enticements and secrets (John 4);
- The only time he spit in public was to mix dirt with saliva in order to heal the blind man;
- He revealed His sympathy to the healed blind man when he was kicked out of the local synagogue for believing Jesus was more than a prophet (John 9);
- He delivered a manly, direct, but measured reproof of the Pharisees whose father was the devil (John 8).
- He marshaled a manly defense of Mary when criticized by Judas for her extravagantly pouring of perfume on our Lord's feet (John 12).
- He demonstrated humility and love at the Last Supper by washing the feet of His disciples -- the duty of a servant.
- He was a master of the gentle rebuke to Peter, Philip, and Martha.
- He did not shame, embarrass, or humiliate the woman with an issue of blood or the woman caught in adultery (Mark 9:20f; John 4).
- He graciously retired and left the region when the Gadarenes begged him to leave (Mark 5).
- In His speech He avoided bluntness sidestepping literalness and crudeness. He never complained, never griped, and never had garlic in his words. Unlike odious women whose words are daggers wrapped in

silk, our Lord spoke to the “tune of lilies.” Holy men refer to Him as “fairest Lord Jesus” (Psalm 45).

- He exhibited wisdom and respect in His retort to Pilate who errantly thought he had more power than he really had (John 19).
- He endured the cruel cross with courage, nobility, and dignity.
- He did not curse the soldiers who crucified Him; rather, he said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
- He is the gentle Savior outside the church gently knocking on the door hoping to be invited in (Revelation 3:20).

Because our Lord does not behave unseemingly, He is the scent of jasmine without the roar of thunder; the sunshine that causes cold rocks to yield its chill; the spiritual gravity that holds the world together; the lullaby in the lightning storm; and, the feather that cracks hardened hearts.

When things get tense, put the sweetness of Jesus on our lips.

God acts selflessly towards you

1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity . . . seeketh not her own . . .

◆ The word “seeketh” is a feminine verb referring to one who seeks, looks, wants, and strives for one’s own interests. This is poetry dressed in the finest luxury fabrics.

Someone said that selflessness is like a candle that lights the room for others without worrying how much wax it loses.

Unlike some people who are only generous for their own benefit -- only “giving” when they are really only looking for something in return, our

Lord gave of Himself graciously and generously demanding nothing in return (see Luke 6:34-35). He is a river that gives life to whatever it touches without asking for repayment.

- He did not come to this earth to be ministered to, but to minister.
- He came to seek and save the lost . . .
- He healed ten lepers all at once.
- He generously used His time and power, and His disciples energies, in healing the demoniac possessed by a legion² of angels.
- He hosted 5000 men plus women and children and not just his disciples when the people sought to be taught of Him.
- He graciously and stunningly said to the woman caught in an act of adultery and maliciously accused: “Neither do I condemn thee.” And, he did it without compromising His righteousness, “Go and sin no more.”
- When providing wine to the newly weds in Cana, He gave them 180 gallons of the finest wine – enough for the guests and enough to sell for generous wedding gift.

Perhaps you have heard of the man who did not like to read books because reading took his mind off himself.

A man who is all wrapped in himself is overdressed; and, a man who looks in the mirror is often blinded by the stare because he can't see what's on the inside.

When on earth, Jesus served humanity. When He spoke, it was to encourage His sheep. When He was quiet, it was for the benefit of people.

² The Roman army's standard unit for a legion was about 6,000 soldiers

In a noisy world, silence calms the soul. Both His silence and speaking ministered to men.

The Scripture tells us that, “He daily loads us with benefits.” His miracles were performed for the good of people – a mattress on which to rest from the harsh realities of life. Not once did He perform a miracle to meet His own needs. There was no water, or food, or comfort on the cross, yet He went there for the benefit of you and me.

Even at this very hour sitting enthroned in glory at the right hand of the Father, Jesus seeks your best, your edification, and your success. Even now, “all things are working together for good to those who love God and are called by His purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is not to say everything that happens to us is good. But in stressful times, He is at work bringing good out of evil.

As “the resurrection and the life” Jesus is the “tree of life” that bears fruit for others to eat – a tree that gives life without asking for repayment. He is like the Nile River that flows through many lands quenching thirst, watering crops, and sustaining life – never keeping the precious water of life for itself. Jesus is the “light of the world” warming all things; like the Sun He releases sunbeams so all can see without charging anyone for its warmth of life.

Consider these texts on the generosity of Jesus:

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Philippians 2:6-11 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men . . .

John 2:11 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

He is like an oak tree with deep roots and stability so others can lean on Him and find strength to stand against the winds of adversity that howl through the soul.

God is not easily angered with you

1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity . . . is not easily provoked . . .

◆ The Greek word “provoked” (paroxuno) means “to sharpen” and it refers to rousing one’s anger on the grindstone of conflict; to easily bursting into flames like a matchstick; like lava, anger burns everyone and everything in its path. Anger lives in some people like a kettle on boil – lid rattling, steam hissing, just waiting to spill.

Moreover, “provoke” implies anger that breaks into the noise and chaos of war. But, this thunder of canons is contrary to the nature of God who is called the God of Peace -- a peace that guides men (Philippians 4:6-8), crushes Satan (Romans 16:20), sanctifies believers (Thessalonians 5:23) and quiets the roar within Christians (Hebrews 13:20).

The text informs us that God is not easily provoked; that is, He is not a dormant volcano with pressure building up until it erupts with burning ash destroying everything in its path; nor is He like a forest fire with an angry, orange glare craving to devour brush and seedlings; nor is He like a roaring, hungry beast tearing flesh and bone to satisfy His hunger.

Rather, He is more like a calm, still lake at dawn – glass like and undisturbed reflecting the trees and rugged peaks with perfect clarity; like a snowfall at night blanketing the earth with white powder, purity, and peace; like the hush before a storm – real, restful, and reticent.

How often do you lose your cool, blow your stack, and express frustration when things don't go your way? Holes in the wall, broken glass, flushed cheeks, nostrils flared, and bent eyebrows expose a heart out of sync with the God of peace.

Our precious Lord never smolders with red-hot coals over our clumsy carnal ways.

The word "easy" is **not** in the text. Love is plainly **not** provoked. The adverbs "easily" was added because they knew that God's wrath is sometimes aroused by the wicked (Psalm 7:11). But, towards His children?

The late Middle English has the sense of "invoke or summon." The term comes from the Old French word *provoquer* which is derived from the Latin word *provocare* 'challenge', from *pro-* 'forth' + *vocare* 'to call'.

This, however, does not mean God cannot get angry or be grieved over sin. He is not a bowl of mush or like Jell-o nailed to the wall. All texts must submit to the whole of the Scripture and the whole of Scripture does not promote a God who is sappy and tolerant of sin. Anger is just as much a diamond attribute of God as His love (Psalm 7:11; 78:40; Isaiah 12:1; Romans 1:18).

Let's not shake the stick at both ends with intolerance of human weakness at one end and tolerance of sin at the other. This text does not encourage passivity or cuckoo tolerance of evil. If everyone is tolerant of every sin, then intolerant sins will emerge to annoy the tolerant.

But, this text deals with the human problem of being easily irritable like honey badgers and Tasmanian devils.

We are quickly agitated and snort like African buffalos because we are not perfected in love. Our family members immediately feel the silverback ire when we are annoyed. They are familiar with our beating the chest tirades when we are miffed. Our frowns and flared nostrils reveal our imperfections.

Our Lord, however, is not a huffy-puffy, volcanic, angry person.

- He did not send a destroying angel to kill Herod when the paranoid king sought to kill Him while slaughtering the babes in Bethlehem;
- When the temple merchants abused His Father's House, He made a scourge of small cords, drove them all out of the temple including the sheep and the oxen; He even poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables . . . but there is no record of him whipping or beating the moneychangers; that is, He injured no man.
- When asked about the lawfulness of taxes, Jesus did not rail on the Roman government for over taxing the people; rather, He left the crowd with a statement that has bewildered men for centuries: "Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."
- When parents brought their children to Jesus for a blessing, his disciples sharply turned them away for they appeared to be a distraction to our Lord's ministry. Rather than being angry at the parents or the children or His insensitive followers, he graciously and gently corrected the twelve saying, "Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).
- When his disciples argued about who was the greatest among them, Jesus did not castigate them; rather, he used the heat and friction to instruct them about their need for servanthood (Mark 9:34-35).
- When Jesus saw a large crowd that was "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9), He did not become frustrated by the overwhelming needs of the people. Rather, he was "moved with compassion" to feed them, heal the sick, and to instruct the people the ways of God (Matthew 9:36).
- In instructing His disciples about the kingdom through parables, He did not get angry with their slowness to comprehend spiritual matters.

Rather, he slowly and patiently explained the meaning of each parable to them (Matthew 13).

- When dealing with the deep sin of the adulterous woman and the blatant hypocrisy of the Pharisees, our Lord did not give them a scathing lecture on their wickedness. He simply said, “let him that is without sin let him cast the first stone” and to the woman, “Go and sin no more” (John 8).
- The only time our Lord showed visible anger was over the synagogue leaders who were arrogantly miffed by his question, “Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath?” Though He was grieved over their hardness of heart, He did not scold them. Rather, He graciously restored the man’s paralyzed arm and made him whole (Mark 3:5f).
- When Philip failed to grasp that Jesus was truly God and truly man, “the way, the truth, and he life,” he did not chastize Philip with a cat of nine tails. Rather, He queried his disciple with provoking questions: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:6ff).
- When in the Garden on the night of his betrayal, Peter drew a sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, a slave of the high priest. Jesus immediately rebuked the violence, stating firmly, “No more of this!” (Luke 22:51). Futher, what a testimony of His grace and power to the high priest!
- He did not bite the heads off members of the Sanhedrin who conjured up lies to indict him for treason – rather he silently accepted their mistreatment as a lamb is silent before its shearers (Isaiah 53:7).
- Rather than excoriating His executioners in a rage of anger, He prayed for their forgiveness (Luke 23:34).

- When other disciples told Thomas they had seen the Lord, he did not believe them and demanded empirical evidence of His resurrection. When Christ entered the room, He did not angrily castigate the man; rather, our Lord said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:25-27).

Are you familiar with the word, “knucklehead?” It refers to a youth who does such stupid things that his parents knuckle him in the skull to get his attention when he misbehaves.

When our sins come before God, he doesn’t get emotional. He doesn’t knock us in the skull to get our attention or because He is angry with us. Moreover, He does not call us “knuckleheads,” but “beloved children.” Though He may discipline us for our good, He does not tie us to the masthead and whip us with a cat of nine tails within an inch of life for wrongdoing.

We are easily irritated because we have high expectation of people. We complain and gripe when our spouses don't jump up to meet an urgent need.

It was said of General Lee that He did not expect men to be better than they are, because he understood original sin. Though he expected obedience, He did not expect perfection from his men. He sought excellence, but never demanded perfection. He did not lose heart when the odds appeared to be against Him, because He trusted in Providence to turn things right because the Word of God taught Him to hope – and no Christian should be bereft of hope (The Maxims of Robert E. Lee, p. xix).

God does not keep a record of your wrongs

1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity . . . thinketh no evil . . .

◆ The word “thinketh” comes from the Greek word “logizomai” which means “to account” or “keep a record.” The negative particle *ou* negates the verb and is in the emphatic position. The word “account” (logizomai) is a business term. It refers to record keeping. . . . accounting . . . and writing numbers in ledgers.

Consequently the NIV, Berean Bible, NASB and others appropriately translate the text similarly: “God does not keep a record of wrongs;” that is, He is not a meticulous, detail-orientated Accountant fixated on the number of sins we commit.

Some people curate wrongs like relics in the museum of their mind.

The Savior is not He a Divine Calculator tabulating the facts about our iniquity. He is not busy recording every error, blunder, sin, or transgression of law.

Our Lord did not tabulate the sins, errors, and blunders of Peter, James, or John. He knows them but only exposed a few of them so that his disciples might believe, repent, and grow in grace.

Consequently, the believer can relax and enjoy fellowship with God . . . but, in order to do so, he must believe this text: “God does not keep a record of wrongs” against us.

Too many of us are in the business of keeping lists of wrongs suffered. We can remember in great detail every offense against us. When our mate offends us, they are likely not only to hear about the recent incident, but receive a whole laundry list of wrongs every time they offend our sensitivities.

Not only do we keep lists of wrongs, we withdraw love when we are hurt. We pout . . . resign . . . and plunge into self-pity. When wronged, our well of love dries up like a white sheet hanging in the sunshine. Not so with

Christ. When hurt by our sin, His galvanized love directed Him to the cross to pay for our sins.

Because we keep records of wrong, some of us see God as a Sin Accountant: “Ah ha, you did it again!”

We see Him as the Great Record Keeper in the Sky making list after list of our sins, which He intends to painfully punish at the right time.

But, our God does not keep records. The Father does not make lists. The Son is not an auditor. In fact, the Scripture tells us, “He does not remember our sins and iniquities” (Hebrews 10:17). Theos is not the Great Record Keeper! He is the Great Forgetter!

Moreover, His Divine forgetfulness isn’t due to weakness or oversight, but a deliberate act of mercy and grace.

His forgetfulness is like a London fog that roles in to obscure our sins so we cannot see them in front of us; like the rising sun that erases the shadows so that only sunbeams remain; like a broken file cabinet, drawers jammed, labels missing, and papers lost; like a broken bank vault with no key to open it in order to search for a record of our wrongs.

God rejoices in the truth

1 Corinthians 13:6 Charity rejoiceth . . .

◆ . . . not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

These text phrases appear to go together—a positive declaration followed by a negative statement.

The verb “rejoiceth” means “to be glad” or “to take pleasure in.”

The adverb “not” negates the action of the verb; that is, He is not like a fireworks display that burst forth in color, with popping sounds, and shared awe over man’s corruption. He is more like the rain falling on a grave – quiet, necessary, but never celebratory.

The word “iniquity” is a translation of the Greek word *adikia* which refers to transgressions of law, or “unrighteousness.” Again, the negative particle *ou* negates the verb “rejoiceth.”

Oh, the lure of darkness dressed in an evening gown – the attraction of a honeypot that tempts with beauty but has the kiss of death. While we may take temporal pleasures in our sins, God takes no pleasure in our transgressions or the consequences of our sins. If anything, He has a heavy heart over our great failures – grief that teaches us to float when swimming in tears.

Ellicott: The attitude of our mind towards sin is a great test of the truth of our religious feeling.

We love bad news, don’t we? The media has learned that bad news sells more newspapers than good news. But, God takes no pleasure in seeing His enemies fall or wayward Christians stumbling. His is the sorrow felt by a sinking ship; a dying sparrow; and, the loss of home to a fire.

Thus, the man influence by His love is truly grieved over his own sin, rejoices in His forgiveness, and is truly sorry over the news that reports the ruin of his enemies.

Practically, how can a Christian possibly takes pleasure in sins for which Christ died? It simply is not right to do the dance of joy over things God rejects.

Though some members of our race are cruel, this fact does not infer God is cruel. While modern terrorists may delight in cutting off the heads of Americans, God does not derive sadistic pleasure from our pain. Our Lord

is not amused by our suffering. He does not rejoice in the fall of the wicked nor does he bring out bottles of champagne when we flop.

The man of God, however, may experience ambivalence: joy in justice, but sorrow for the sinner. He notes the fall of the wicked, but derives no pleasure in their sudden death or their plunge from power (Proverbs 24:17).

Have you ever noticed how many movies are about sweet revenge where the bad guy gets what he deserves in the end or where a mafia figure is gunned down in a volley of bullets or a cruel criminal bleeds to death from a wound caused by his own weapon? Americans love sweet revenge movies, but our Lord is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 2:9). While His holiness demands justice, His love and grace aches to express kindness—even to His enemies. Our God even waters thorns hoping they will grow into flowers. He is the river of life that cause desert flowers to bloom.

The human eye is the most sensitive part of the human body. Even a hair in the eye can inflict excruciating pain. The Scripture tells us that He who touches you touches the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8). Even the hairs of your head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). And, if a sparrow doesn't fall to the ground without His knowledge, He is not out of touch with our trials and traumas. He would hug a cactus if He thought it would turn into a lamb's ear. Our Lord came to this dark earth as the light of the world, and not to blow out candles of hope.

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates His own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"

Though we are often confused by His silence, He takes no pleasure in our pain and heartaches. He is like the patient farmer waiting for the seed to sprout. He sings to the storm; gives bread to the hungry wolf; and offers a coat to Siberian winds.

Rejoicing in truth

The word "truth" here stands in juxtaposition to "iniquity." It means virtue, piety, goodness, and faithfulness.

The "truth" in this passage is not theoretical truth as in philosophy, but practical, hands-on, sweeping-the-floor faithfulness that ministers to the physical needs of men – truth that pays the bills of a struggling saint; truth that says kind things to troubled souls, truth that lends a helping hand to the aged; truth that stands up to honor the elderly; truth that opens a door for a grandmother; that is, charity in action . . . goodness in action . . . kindness in action . . . generosity in action.

Joy is as rare as a diamond on a sidewalk, So rare . . . St. Paul has to repeat the command "rejoice" twice Philippians 4:8

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, **Rejoice.**"

God's truth is like the North Star– constant, faithful, and reliable, always in the same place in the sky night after night, decade after decade; like a shadow at high noon – always in place and hardly noticed; like an ancient Peruvian-Inca wall – weathered, but still standing; like the roots of an oak tree on a high peak -- deeply anchored, holding firm through high winds and storms; like a loyal dog at the door – always waiting and ready to serve; like an anchor in a stormy sea – holding fast beneath the raging currents of an angry ocean.

God loves truth and hates deceit. He is like a compass point – always pointing towards the North Star regardless of the weather or the terrain.

- Even at age 12, Jesus delighted in discussing theology with doctors and lawyers in the temple;
- At the Last Supper our Lord claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the light" (John 14:6).

- After the disciples were saved from the storm they confessed, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 14:33).
- When the Canaanite woman with a demon possessed daughter begged for help, the Lord shunned her saying, “It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.” She quickly replied, “True, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.” (Matthew 15:27)
- Even the Pharisees and Herodians could say, “Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth . . .”
- When Jesus answered the question about what was the greatest commandment, the scribe said, “thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he” (Mark 12:32).

The point of these passages is to show that Jesus loves truth, is truth, and spoke the truth.

We love playing tricks on one another. The bank robber who has mastered deceit and escapes with tons of cash intrigues us. God, on the other hand, is not a trickster. He does not play holy pranks on people. He does not turn obnoxious people into toads. He loves truth because He knows that lies ruin people. He is totally redemptive in His purposes, and He plans nothing except good for our lives.

Likewise, lovers of God are like moths irresistibly drawn to the flame –to faithfully follow the light of truth; to be like soldiers unswervingly obeying orders.

God protects your secrets

1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity . . . beareth all things . . .

◆ The Greek word “beareth” (stego) refers to God covering all paradoxes in men; that is, He “hides secrets,” “covers over with silence.” The word implies protecting another’s failures from public exposure, and covering up embarrassing matters.

All of us have personal matters we do not want others to know about. Secrets are like private fires – whose flames, if not protected from the wind, burn entire homes to the ground. But, the Lord isn’t this way. God clothes us with righteousness of Christ so the nakedness of our sin is not exposed.

Privacy is so important the government forbids health centers from sharing one’s medical records to interested parties.

“The right to privacy is a fundamental aspect of individual autonomy and freedom. The concept of privacy has been recognized as a constitutional right in various jurisdictions, including the United States, where it has been interpreted to include the right to be free from unwarranted government intrusion into personal matters” (SEDM, AI Litigation)

How much more does our God forgive, cover our sins under the blood of Christ, and prevent our most embarrassing matters from going public.

He is like a cloak that covers our private matters from the sting of judgment. Like a canopy in the desert that shields us from the blistering Sun; like a harbor that saves ships from the raging sea; like the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople that protected the Byzantines from invasions of German Vandals, Atilla the Hun, and the knife welding Arabs; like a mother hen covering her chicks in a fight to the death; like a warm cloke given to a shivering soldier; like a shield that never cracks absorbing blow after blow of relentless attacks.

Our Heavenly Father takes no pleasure in our failures or in those who repeat our sins. Rather, He desires they may be forgotten forever and hidden from public gaze. Interestingly, our God seems to suffer from

some kind of retrograde amnesia – “your sins and iniquities I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

Moreover, love does not take pleasure in gossip or the personal exposure of some official’s secret sins. Railing is strictly forbidden by God’s law (1 Peter 3:9). It does not find malicious pleasure in some news report about a congressman falling into a honeytrap or some hedonist going bankrupt.

Our Lord did not reveal the secret sins of His mother or family members; of Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, or even the sin that caused the paralysis of the paralytic in John 5, His disciples, or even of Judas. He did not castigate Nicodemus or give him a lecture on hypocrisy. He did not blame the newlyweds in John 2 for their poverty, or Lazarus for being a beggar, or the Rich Young Ruler for being blind and covetous. Nor did our Lord shame Peter after he denied Him three times before a little maid on the night of his unjust trial. `

The most beautiful gardens in the world are shielded by walls that prevent trespass and intrusion. God’s diary of our private matters is under lock and key to prevent public consumption. Our Lord is like a mist over a lake at dawn – soft concealment that invites reverence, not probing.

Thus, God’s children are pearls in an unopened shell; diamonds in the making; rubies hidden under rocks in rivers and streams; butterflies emerging from cocoons made of sand, twigs, and debris.

God believes in You

1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity . . . believeth all things . . .

◆ We know that we are to believe in God, but do we know that God believes in us?

Faith trusts. We trust Jesus to save us, and He entrusts to us with his global mission of reaching the nations with the gospel. Faith produced faithfulness; and God's love means He is faithful to His promises. He is the lighthouse that never dims even when the sea becomes dark and angry.

Our Father not only hides our secrets, covers our sins, and conceals our faults, He puts the most favorable construction on everything we do. He plants good seeds in the gardens of others so they may have a beautiful harvest.

- He saw Sarah laugh at the three travelers, but recorded the faithful act of Sarah calling her husband "lord." (1 Peter 3).
- He saw the righteous vexation of Lot living in Sodom and not his compromise and weakness (2 Peter 2:7-8).
- God never spoke again about David's adultery. Rather, He called David a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22).
- Abraham was taken as a Bedouin and herder of sheep and made the Father of the Hebrew nation.
- Sarai, whose name means bitter, was changed to Sarah which means princess.
- The name Jacob, the man with so many troubles, was melted into a name for the Lord as "The God of Jacob" which refers to grace. Moreover, many students see Jacob as a "heel grabber" (a cheat), but God called him "Israel," a prince with God.
- "Hoshea" ("salvation") name was changed to "Joshua" ("Yahweh saves") at Moses' direction (Numbers 13:16).

- Naomi, the widow and grieving mother, wanted to change her name from “pleasnt” to “Marah” meaning bitter. But, the Lord in His goodness made her “better” and not bitter in Bethlehem, the House of Bread; a grandmother of David, Solomon, and Jesus.
- Elijah crashed in unbelief, doubt, and depression after his confrontation with Jezebel, but appeared alongside Jesus and Moses on the Mt. of Transfiguration.
- Likewise, Moses who was banned from the Promised Land because of the sin of unbelief, found himself sharing the glory with Jesus and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Moreover, his name is mentioned 77 times in the New Testament in a positive, holy manner.
- Jesus called impulsive, sanguine Peter “a Rock.”
- Zaccheus was a wee little man who became a tower of faith.
- Blind Bartimaeus became Bold Bartimaeus after he cried out, “Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me.”
- In our Lord’s time, Jews hated Romans, but Jesus noted of the Centurian he had never seen such great faith in all Israel.
- Jesus called the Canaanite woman a “dog,” then announce her as a woman of great faith.
- Five female women, some guilty of incest and adultery, found their way into our Lord’s genealogy (Matthew 1) and our Lord was pleased to have them as his grandmother.

Instead of being defined by their blunders, the lives of flawed men become testaments to God's grace and power. Why? Because He is a God of love; a God that calls us to face the sun though shadows follow us; to choose warmth and light, and faith over the dark clouds of doubt; to light a candle when the lights go out; to open a window to let the fresh air in; to plant flowers after a long snowy winter; to point our compass to the

North Star of joy; to sail by the starlight and not by the fury of storms; to be kites in the sky rising against the wind soaring higher and higher.

As a father, I would go to every game or concert or choir performance where my children were involved. I was the zealous father in the stands yelling, screaming, and pulling for my children agonizing over every play. Do you think God is any different?

He wants us to succeed. He wants our marriages to be happy. He wants us to be pleasant parents. He wants us to do well in school. He is the great Cheerleader in Heaven encouraging us to do better and to jump higher.

He is called "the God of Jacob" (Ps. 20:1) -- a title of grace. God helped the man when all others abused him. When his enemies tried to impoverish him, God made him rich. When his uncle Laban tried to trick and enslave him as an indentured servant, God multiplied his herds and then led him to freedom.

At one time Jacob groaned, "all these things be against me," but he could not have been more wrong. Joseph was alive, Benjamin was safe, and the land of Goshen awaited the joy of his arrival (Genesis 42:36).

In his death, the man nobody loved receive more respect and more honor than other man. The Egyptians produced the largest funeral in the Bible (See Genesis 50).

If you are discouraged, let your faith tap into this well of truth: "This I know, that God is for me" (Psalm 56:9).

God has hope for you

1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity . . . hopeth all things . . .

◆ Hope is a virtue that swings into action when all visible signs of success have vanished. It is candle light that defies the dark; the first star at twilight informing us blackness will not last forever; that the seed under frozen ground is destined to bloom.

His hope is not blind optimism or wishful thinking; rather, it is anvil-conviction that God's Word is accurate and that the hammer of His promises strike truth.

Hopelessness is **not** caused by "a combination of psychological, biological, and environmental factors, including persistent negative thought patterns, stress, illness, bereavement, and unemployment, often linked to depression." Rather, hopelessness is caused by a lack of faith in the God of hope; a lack of attachment to Christ.

Hopelessness is a ship adrift at sea on a starless night with no compass or guiding light; a full well with no bucket to fetch the water; a house with all the windows boarded up; a clock with no hands signaling time has stopped in the darkness and the coldness of the night; a flame trapped in ice.

Throw out psychology with all its psychoheresies and become a student of theology and Christology.

"The Father" and the "Root of Jesse" is called "the God of hope." He is never called "YHWH" or Yahwey in the New Testament.

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Consider this prayer: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace" implies that the powerful energy of hope comes from outside the man; that is, its source of power is in God and not in the human heart; in heaven waiting to come to earth on the wings of angels.

This power overcomes the black stormclouds of doubt, fear, depression, and the belief things cannot become better. Hope is the morning star; the first flame in an open fire; the sparrow singing before dawn; a whisper that defies silence; the rainbow at the end of a storm.

What a wonderful reminder that God is the Source of our hope; the leiospilos nelii, the seed that splits rocks; the common crane that flies a mile high.

God is the Great Hoper . . . the encouraging Father Who wants only the best for His children. He is the Giver of hope, faith, joy, and power (Romans 15:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16).

When faith can no longer believe well, it hopes. Even in death, we believe in the hope of the resurrection (Acts 24:15).

Even when we show no signs of cooperating with His plan, God hopes. He hopes we will succeed, that we will believe, that we will do what is right. God simply loves us and can do nothing else. He is a God who never stops seeking us. God is good and never changes his attitude toward us. He does not forsake us when difficulties arise or sin knocks on our door (Hebrews. 13:5); His sunshine doesn't fail because shadows cross our path; His covenants are etched in stone; His candle of love does not go out at night; and, His hand never lets go.

This, however, does not mean that bad things don't happen to good people. They do. First, we must learn that we don't know more than God, nor are we more compassionate than He. We face human limitations. We don't know why He rescues some and not others. It is O.K. to say we don't know or understand. After all, we must be humble . . . and poor . . . and remember we are specks of dust on the scales of justice that simply do not have the capacity to grasp the golden providence of God; that is, no man flies high enough to see the wisdom of God's dealings with men.

Before Abraham left Mesopotamia or obeyed his voice or had children, the Great Hoper said, "I will bless you ... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3).

Saint Paul's understanding is clear: "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). Far from being a simple wish for the future with no guarantee that it will occur, the Christian hope is the presence of divine love in a Person, the Holy Spirit, a current of life that carries us to a quiet island to fellowship with His love.

Just the presence of Jesus at the wake held for Lazarus multiplied hope through the mourner's home like a warm breeze on a cold day. His words galvanized faith; and, a dead man came to life.

For further study, consider the subjunctive verbs in the New Testament like (Matthew 1:20) "you maybe do not fear;" that is, every subjunctive and optative verb in the New Testament has hope attached to it. English words like "might," "may," "shall," and "should" are English equivalents that express hope.

Know that faith in God's love is the lighthouse for those lost at sea. After all, He is called the "God of hope."

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

God's love endures your weaknesses

1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity . . . endureth all things.

◆ The English word “endureth” comes from the Greek word *hupomeno* which means “to remain under.”

Enduring others’ weaknesses is like carrying a fragile vase through a storm — you don’t hold it because it’s strong, but because it matters.

The idea behind this word is the ability to respond virtuously while under pressure; that is, the pressure, trial, or affliction does not have to be removed in order to do good for others. His love is like a gentle breeze that keeps blowing regardless of rock cliffs in its path. Endurance is the bridge that holds the weight of thousands of travelers because it was built to never break; it is the sea stack of rocks surrounded by waves that has endured the ocean current for centuries; a flame that refused to die in the wind; the drum that keeps time in junior high orchestra filled with screeches, honks, and squeaks.

Some of us need enduring. We are hard to live with. Many of us are cranky and crotchety, wrinkled and warped – like a prickly pear; like a bear woken to early from hibernation. Getting close to us is like trying to hug a porcupine. We give up on people because they are too thorny to love . . . but . . . God?

He endures irresponsible husbands that can’t seem to do dishes, odious wives with dagger tongues wrapped in sil, ignorant children that behave like monkeys, and political fools that can only create chaos.

Best of all, He endures our ignorance, false beliefs, weaknesses, and fairy tale presumptions that behave like unicorns.

- Jesus endured the weak faith of His followers (Romans 4:19; 14:1).
- He endured their ignorance (Matthew 11);
- He endured Peter’s proud thoughts (Matthew 16);
- He endured Martha’s anxiety about being a good hostess and worry about feeding the crowd.

- He endure men's fear and lack of confidence in their value to the Father (Matthew 10:28).
- He endured the unbelief active in His hometown Nazareth (Mark 5).
- Hebrews 12 informs us He endured the "contradiction of sinners against Himself."
- He even endured the malicious injustice of the all night trial by the Sanhedrin.
- The Father "endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22).
- The Spirit commends Moses Who "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Though we are as abrasive as sand paper and as course as carpenter's file, God does not give up on us. Nothing can separate us from His love (Romans. 8: 30ff). He endures our sins, our weaknesses, our failures, our temper tantrums, our skepticism, our unbelief, our fits of sensuality, our arrogance, and our stupidity. His perfect love endures our human imperfections like a weather rock on a high mountain.. However, endurance does not mean He does not discipline those He loves. As a wise Father He use pain as His tutor for our benefit (Hebrews 12).

Do not hear, however, what is not being said!! In His boundless love, God is not a permissive "parent." He will, in His love, discipline us for our good. Out of love, he sends us to the School of Hardknocks to learn the tough lessons needed to succeed as human beings (Hebrews 12:1-13).

Moreover, in calling us "to endure all things," Paul is not setting us up to be punching bags . . . tolerant of evil, criminal acts against us. Rather, he is calling us to endure the weaknesses of others, and to do what is best for them in the spirit of patience.

God's love never runs dry

1 Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth:

◆ The word “faileth” means “to fall down” or “to perish.”

Despite what we think this text says, love does fail! Many a son has rejected the unfailing love of a good mother and father. Many a darling has walked away from true love. Having done the best they could to win a heart, many a beau has been rejected. Our prisons are full of people who did not respond to love.

Maybe the way to interpret this text is to understand that God's love never harms anyone, never destroys its object, never ruins the loved one, never runs dry; that in loving the unlovely the lover never misses the purpose of a Christ-centered life.

Charity is like the ocean tide. It may be pushed back by storms, delayed by reefs and rocks, but it always finds its way forward. God's love is like a root breaking through stone — slow, unseen, but unstoppable; like a spring that never fails to yield fresh water.

Moreover, the one who endeavors to show charity to difficult people follows the right path, employs the right strategy, and takes the right road. In loving others, one cannot fail his spiritual calling. Yes, love has to be discerning. Permissiveness is not love; welfare is not love.

Expressions of charity spring from an abiding relationship with Christ. Though one may not respond to your goodness, there is no failure in attempting to love the unworthy.

When the text says that charity never fails, it is not talking about results, but the source and supply of charity! It never dries up.

God's love does not fail because God's reservoir of agape springs from the artesian well of His eternal character. His love does not have a shut

off valve. It does not quit or dry up. It does not stumble. It does not stagger. It does not wobble. His love is inexhaustible, unending, and totally committed to us when we are good and when we are bad; that is, in dealing with us, God does not fail by choosing to love us. He is the mountain that never crumbles; the well that never dries up; the candle that never stops burning.

In taking the path of shepherding love, God does not break down. We may quit on God, but God will not quit on us. He will love us to the very end even though some of us may respond incorrectly to His love (John 13:1).

1 Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Having discussed the imperishable qualities of love, Paul now addresses perishable things: prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.

“Prophecies,” (plural) addresses the varied scales of power possessed by preachers including those that have deep spiritual insights into the will of God in this present life and maybe even those who have far reaching insight regarding the end of matters.

Prophecy is the complete authoritative recorded Word of God; the canon of Holy Scripture. At the time of writing Corinthians the New Testament was not yet completed. Authoritative insight into Scripture was needed to guide the church. Because the Canon is now closed there is no such thing as a “word of prophecy” from aggressive, tongue-flappin’ women in the church.

Tongues does not refer to jibber-jabber or baby talk. Rather, the term refers to the gift of learning languages for the purpose of communicating the Christ-event; that is, it was gift given to assist the rapid spread of the gospel in the first century. Languages like “Parthians, and Medes, and

Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene" (Acts 2:9).

Knowledge seems to refer to incomplete knowledge of the gospel-revelation that had not yet been totally revealed in the days of the Corinthians.

The time of this cessation was related to the maturity of the church and the completion of the Canon sometime around 70 AD.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

A panoramic view of history indicates the spectacular gifts ended before 70 AD after the New Testament was complete.

The modern emphasis on charismatic gifts is fraud at worst or a plunge into childishness at best – like a toddler chasing a balloon in the wind.

In conclusion, John Piper reminded us that God is never more glorified than when we delight in Him.

I am not here to tell us to be better and to do more, but to somehow with the eyes of faith to grasp the unfailing love of God for us.

God is not a groupie. He loves us individually, warts and all³.

We will indeed be better and do more, but not until we understand how much we are loved and accepted by Him.

³ The phrase "warts and all" is attributed to Oliver Cromwell, who supposedly told his portrait artist to paint him with all his physical imperfections, including his warts.

Let us not forget that we can give without loving, but God did not love without giving us His precious Son (Matthew 5:45).

If you are tempted to doubt God's love in the midst of your trials, remember that God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son for you. When you believe Him, you can enjoy that love . . . and, in so doing you spread aroma of charity from the garden of His virtues.

May the love and peace of God be with you.

The Greatest Song

Jesus Loves Me This I know

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,
As He loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee,
Saying, "Let them come to Me."

Jesus loves me still today,
Walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give
Light and love to all who live.

Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,

Let His little child come in.
Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for Thee.

Love Applied in the Home

1 Corinthians 13

Rules for the Stockton Home

Every member is expected to direct themselves to obey the following rules:

1. **The rule of Scriptural roles** (Ephesians 5:24 – 6:4; Titus 2:1-6; 1 Peter 3:1-8; 1 Corinthians 7:1-4)
2. **The rule of holiness:** "Be ye holy for I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16)
3. **The rule of love and charity** (1 Corinthians 13):
4. **The rule of peace:** "And let the peace of God rule (umpire) in your hearts (home)" (Colossians 3:15).
5. **The rule of golden silence and the power of listening:** "But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab 2:20); and ". . . Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry . . ." (James 1:19).

6. **The rule of grace:** "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1:2), and " . . . grace is poured into thy lips . . .".
7. **The rule of reconciliation:** "be ye reconciled to God and . . . but, first be reconciled to one another" (2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 5:24).
8. **The rule of happiness:** "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).
9. **The rule of freedom:** "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

The Rules Explained

The family is not only an economic unit, but a training ground for godliness.

Every member is expected to uphold the following rules:

1. **The rule of Scriptural roles** (Ephesians 5:24 – 6:4; Titus 2:1-6; 1 Peter 3:1-8; 1 Corinthians 7:1-4)

God has assigned roles for men and women, for wives and husbands, children and servants. We will follow the roles God has assigned to each member of the family and do our best to define and clarify those roles, duties, and responsibilities. Family love is like a garden, when one tends the nursery flowers blossom.

Specifically, God calls the wife to be submissive, supportive, and respectful of her husband; and the husband to lead and love. Children are called to hear, listen, and obey. Parents are instructed to bring up children in the nurture of the Lord; that is, to teach, train, and discipline children fairly without provoking them to wrath; that is, without pushing

their emotional buttons. Complaining, criticism, disrespect, and laziness about chores and duties merit specific disciplines.

2. **The rule of holiness:** “Be ye holy for I am holy” (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16)

This rule calls us to separate from evil and to draw near to God as iterated in His Word; to judge sin and to follow righteousness; to seek purity and to avoid iniquity. Consequently, there will be no swearing, blasphemy, or profanity in this home. Each member will ask permission to share a helpful criticism; slander, railing, hitting, or fulminating are forbidden. Each member is responsible to control their own tongue . . . if not, discipline will follow. We will do our best to avoid what God forbids and to license what God permits. Like the burning bush we seek to be filled with His presence of holiness without being consumed. Like coloring within the lines, rules provide structure and discipline. Freedom with restraint is the law of this home.

3. **The rule of love and charity** (1 Corinthians 13):

Charity follows the law of patience, kindness, contentment, humility, decency, selflessness, joy controlling one’s anger, truth, good manners, forgiveness, protecting one another, faith, hope, and endurance. Charity is like a candle that spreads warmth without losing its own light; like a bridge over troubled waters that helps others cross from despair to hope.

The goal of our family life is to learn how to love. Unloving acts merit discipline.

4. **The rule of peace;** “And let the peace of God rule (umpire) in your hearts (family)” (Colossians 3:15).

This home will be governed by peace and not war; peace and not complaining, peace and not criticizing, peace and not bitterness; the peace that leads to sanctification of the whole man (2 Thessalonians 3:24: Hebrews 13:20: Romans 16:20). A man that has his mind set on the Lord

has double peace and multiplies peace. Peace is like a symphony – when each member of the orchestra happily plays their part, how can there be discord? Harmony results when each member studies his notes and stops blaming the conductor and other band members.

5. **The rule of golden silence and the power of listening:** "But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab 2:20); and “. . . Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry . . . “ (James 1:19).

The word “hear” is mentioned 550 times in Scripture and appears to be the most difficult skill to master. Many seem to have a tongue that’s tied in the middle and flappin’ at both ends.

Because God gave us one mouth and two ears, each family member must harness his tongue and take off his ear muffs. The one who feels healthy, happy, and loved is rich indeed; Roses have thorns, but we are thankful that thorns have roses.

Each member of this family will learn the golden rule of silence; to listen more and to talk less; to not complain, criticize, and censure others but to put honey on the lips to add sweetness to family life. A member who can’t listen, persistently complains or criticizes another will be subject to discipline may be asked to leave the house for a time.

6. **The rule of grace:** “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1:2) “. . . grace is poured into thy lips . . .”.

We uphold God’s law and do not tolerate open rebellion; but, we make room for human weakness. Grace can overcome failure and undo the knots that sin caused: that is, grace, love, goodness, honesty, and forgiveness will reign in this household because we are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God. Grace is the sugar that makes the medicine go down; the blanket that covers a multitude of sins; the strength to say,

"I was hurt," or "I was wrong," and the power to say, "I forgive you." Grace is the sunlight that repels darkness and gives hope to those enduring a dark night of despair. We will learn to walk in the light as He is in the light, and put honey on our lips to sweeten life in this home. A mouth filled with vinegar must be washed out with soap or leave this home.

7. **The rule of reconciliation:** "be ye reconciled to God . . . but first be reconciled to one another" (2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 5:24).

Each member of this family must do their best to do what is right and acknowledge wrong, to repair broken relationships, and to forgive one another. Keep short accounts. Nothing has priority over reconciliation. You can't walk with a wound; reconciliation is tending to an injury before continuing the journey. At times we may wound one another, but grace heals and grace helps us to be wounded healers. Grace can undo the effects of sores caused by prickly pear relationships.

8. **The rule of happiness:** "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

The first and last word in this sentence is "rejoice." Every member of this family will make a double effort to be happy and to make others happy. A cup overflowing with happiness and thankfulness has no room for peevishness and grumpiness. Light a candle instead of cursing the darkness; add honey to every conversation; and, rest on the pillow of His sovereignty and love.

9. **The rule of freedom:** "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

The bonds that tie this family together are based on love, trust and integrity. If one is not happy, he or she is free to leave . . . but with only

that which belongs to them. Jumping ship is always an option for those miserable at sea.

Specific Disciplines

The dad / husband has the duty to set the rules and to provide disciplines for breaking the rules; the wife / mother has the duty of helping enforce those rules; children have the duty to support the rules and to submit to the disciplines of the home.

As patterns surface, new disciplines may be added.

1. The matrimonial relationship and love is a privilege and a duty. Failure to love or perform one's duty to this matrimonial relationship out of stubbornness, anger, bitterness, or rebellion against God threatens the marriage leaving one partner the duty of confrontation, separation, or divorce.
2. Money and work: Every member will contribute to help pay the bills, fix the home, do chores, and to help keep the house clean. A person who can't contribute or do their share of household duties may be ordered to stay in their room, or even to leave the home for a period of time. Children will be assigned additional chores until they learn to be happy and productive.
3. Cooperation: Members who can't cooperate with each other may be forced to work together by some mechanism, or assigned to their room, or asked to leave the house for a period of time, and even asked to leave the home semi-permanently.
4. Criticism, censorship, condemnation, and castigation: a person may ask permission to share a hurt or a helpful criticism; but, off the cuff complaining or railing is strictly forbidden. Disciplines include isolation, confession of wrong doing, extra work assignment, request to leave the home for a short period of time, or even a demand to leave the home semi-permanently.

5. Rebellion: refusal, stubbornness, or uncooperativeness is a form of rebellion. Rebellion may be subject to physical discipline, isolation, or a demand to leave the home semi-permanently. The person on discipline cannot be restored to the privilege of communion without repentance, confession, and restoration.

I have read the following rules and agree to do my best to keep them.

Signatures

Husband / Father

Wife / mother

Publications

Books we have written:

1. Biblical Standards for Civil Rulers, Form #13.013
2. Should Christians Always Obey the State?, Form #13.014
3. The Crisis of Church Incorporation, Form #13.017
4. A Family Under God, Form #17.001
5. Origin of the Bible, Form #17.002
6. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, Form #17.003
7. Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel, Form #17.004
8. Prayer Puts Power In Your Life, Form #17.005
9. Old Testament Theology, Form #17.006
10. Towards Exegetical Eschatology, Form #17.007
11. A Commentary on Revelation, Form #17.055
12. Commentary on Romans 13, Form #17.056
13. What is the Date of the Biblical Flood?, Form #17.057
14. Behold His Glory, Form #17.059
15. Proverbs for Wisdom, Form #17.060
16. The Pursuit of Piety, Form #17.061
17. 101 Sermons on God and Government, Form #17.062
18. Marriage Counseling Manual, Form #17.063
19. Words for the Weary, Form #17.064
20. Correcting the Upside Down Gospel, Form #17.065
21. Sermons on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Form #17.066
22. If I Could Do Church Again, Form #17.067
23. The Feminist War Against God's Law, Form #17.068
24. The Case for Head Coverings and Restoring God's Law Order to the Church, Form #17.069
25. The Sovereignty of God and the Madness of Politics, Form #17.070
26. The Pilgrim's Songbook, Form #17.071
27. The Route of the Exodus, Form #17.073
28. Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Form #17.074
29. Imprecatory Psalms, Form #17.075
30. Political Psalms, Form #17.076
31. Psalms for the Troubled Heart, Form #17.077
32. Psalms Messianic, Form #17.078
33. Psalms of Asaph, Form #17.079
34. Double Through Discipleship, Form #17.080
35. The Art of Conflict Management, Form #17.081
36. Know Who You Are In Christ, Form #17.082
37. From Corinth to American Churches, Form #17.083
38. When Satan Goes to Church, Form #17.084
39. Nike Greek Grammar Manual, Form #17.085
40. The Magna Carta, Form #10.017
41. The Case for Common Law Marriage, Form #13.022
42. The Matthew 24 Preterist Interpretation, Form #17.086
43. The Passover Seder, Form #17.087
44. You Can Be Your Own Lawyer, Form #17.088
45. Justification v. Sanctification, Form #17.089
46. Doctrinal Issues in Modern Times, Form #17.090
47. Opting Out of the Tax System, Form #10.018

48. Opting Out of Property Tax, Form #14.023
49. Freedom Documents, Form #10.019
50. Jewish Myths, Form #17.091
51. America's Worst President, Form #17.092
52. Our Greatest Heroes, Form #17.093
53. Solomon's Sex Education for Sons, Form #17.094
54. Why So Much Suffering in WWII?, Form #17.095
55. Learning to Say No, Form #10.020
56. Winning in Traffic Court, Litigation Tool #10.022
57. Apostasy and the Man of Sin, Form #17.096
58. The Proper Place of God's Law Today, Form #17.097
59. God's Christmas Storm, Form #17.098
60. The Greatest Need in the Church, Form #17.099
61. Grampa's Prayers and Poems, Form #13.023
62. Grampa's Family Fun Poems, Form #13.024
63. Power Principles of Exegesis, Form #17.100
64. Shalom, Shalom!, Form #17.101
65. The Anathema of Another Gospel, Form #17.102