

What is this life?

The *necessities of life* can **so** easily pre-occupy our minds, but Scripture puts things in proper context, referring to this life as “a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” What are the implications for how we are to live each day - just what is this life?

What is this life?

We get caught up in the *necessities of life* so easily. Life on this earth commands much energy expenditure and can occupy much of our attention.

But this life here is only a very tiny part of the Big Picture. Scripture puts it in proper context, referring to it as “a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

The day-to-day tasks and occupations of physical life are needful, but they can easily, and in deed for most Believers, normally do, take prime focus in our lives.

How does our Creator and God desire us to live each day? What does he want to occupy our thoughts? Why are we here in the first place? How dominant ought the necessities of life be in our thoughts, our actions, our expenditure of energy?

God does not leave us in the dark on these questions. Some related Scriptures are explored below, organized as follows:

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Please use the companion Study Questions booklet to explore these concepts more deeply and to better take to heart and find practical application of the information in this study.

The questions are best answered as you work your way through this study. Prompts exist throughout, to bring you to appropriate sets of questions. For example:

Qs - How it Was

Where did it all Start?

Maybe it would be helpful to go to the very beginning. Look at the very first mention of mankind in the Bible.

Genesis 1:27 — So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 2:8 — And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Genesis 2:15 — And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

The Mandate

Then, the very first thing God said to the couple gives more insight into the dressing and keeping of the Garden, the broader extent of that work across the earth and God's expectation that they be fruitful and multiply.

Genesis 1:27 — And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth..

The Fall

The sad fact of Eve being deceived by Satan, and then both Eve and Adam disobeying God's clear command, brought

devastating consequences to mankind and to the earth itself. After *the fall*, man was still in the image of God, but marred. God did not change the purpose for man, but man needed God to put some things in place for the present and for the future that would allow a reconciling of God and man. Much more could be written here about God's plan to reclaim both the earth and heaven from the corruption of Satan, but for purposes of this discussion, the focus will remain on the initial events of man's history.

Genesis 3:8 — And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:17-19 — And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

The Nature of God and of Man

From these verses, what can we learn about the nature of God, the nature of man, of God's *image*, of the activities of God, of the copied/mirrored behaviors of man, about the key foci of life...?

Just a few observations here:

- God planted a garden. He did not create the garden

of Eden as he did the whole of the earth, but he actually **planted** it.

- God put Adam in the garden “to dress it and to keep it..” Not terribly dissimilar to God planting it.... Carrying on God’s work with the earth.
- God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. Was it to enjoy the created environment? Was it to meet with Adam? Probably both?
- Side Note: It is interesting that God was “walking” in the garden, for there is something about “walking” throughout an area that is associated with rulership/ownership/authority (Satan, the “prince of the power of the air”, “the god of this world”, reported to God that he had just come from “going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” Note God’s statement to Abram “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”)
- We still get our physical sustenance from the ground from which we were made, but now it is with much greater effort and with frustration and pain (“thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread...”).
- This added hardship (henceforth “cursed is the ground”), is for our sake; that is, there is in it, a value to us.

This early history of man ought to give us some insight on the purpose of man and the activities that a person ought to engage in? There may even be implications on the types of livelihoods/jobs that are likely to be naturally fulfilling or that would align well with the purpose of man. We can certainly

also see that since *the Fall* God intended that we engage in hard work (be it physical or otherwise), for God stated that “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

This early history of man also has implications about our overall human environment. What often is referred to as *the Dominion Mandate* (Genesis 1:26-28), brings with it responsibility to care for and protect the earth. That is something that will take some amount of our time and energy.

Consider even the simple description of why God put Adam in the garden in the first place: to dress it and keep it. The word *keep* very often in the Bible carries the idea of guarding, protecting and ensuring well-being. With this initial mandate to man, and the example of Adam dressing and keeping the garden, we can see implications for us in our guarding, protecting and ensuring the well-being of the created world.

What also of the mandate to be fruitful and multiply (not add) and fill the earth? Does that have implications on what our expectations and attitudes ought to be regarding time, energy, patience, joy, etc. with children and family?

This modern world has undergone gigantic changes since the first days of Adam in the garden of Eden. The types of work and play available have increased immensely. The things that cry out for our attention are many, but what of God? Does he get our attention? Does our very Creator - the one who determined what we would be and what our purpose would be - does **his** will for us bear on how we decide to structure our lives?

Qs - How it Was

Family life God's Way

There are responsibilities that come with being fruitful and multiplying. God set up the family as the fundamental construct of society, and for things to function as God desires, it is extremely important that fathers, mothers and children fulfill their roles appropriately. Many books have been written on this subject, but here are just a few verses that bring forth some critical aspects of these roles:

Ephesians 6:4

(4) And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 5:22-27

(22) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

(23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

(24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

(25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

(26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

(27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Proverbs 22:6,15

(6) Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

(15) Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

1 Timothy 3:4

(4) One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

Ephesians 6:1

(1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Just imagine what our families and our society would be like if even those few verses were obeyed.

When we desire to yield to God's patterns of responsibility and fulfilment of godly roles, victorious family life emerges, and all members of a family are better able to set their affection on things above. The book, *Resolution for Men*, by Stephen and Alex Kendrick, focuses on important issues for husbands and fathers. Consider the following excerpts from the book:

"A lot of fathers don't realize their vital role, and their kids are destined to suffer for it. If you boil down many of the issues associated with today's detached, passive, or absentee dads, you discover this: *fathers have lost their sense of purpose.*"
(from page 15 of the book)

"We need to ReDiscover God's original intention of what our homes are supposed to be like. Families should be havens of love and enjoyment. Homes should be places of peace and purpose. But great homes don't just happen. They are Gardens that need to be intentionally cultivated and guarded. A man must let truth love and wise discipline become constant ingredients to his fathering. He should carefully nurture his wife, his children, and his own attitude so that his home is a place where

his marriage and the Next Generation can grow and thrive.” (from page 21 of the book)

Qs - Family Responsibility

Proverbs 4:20-26

(20) My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

(21) Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

(22) For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

(23) Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

(24) Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

(25) Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

(26) Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

Please think through this *Where did it all Start?* section again and review your answers to the related questions at the Study Questions booklet. Ask yourself how your interests, your passions, your time, your energy, your affection, fits with God's overall plan for you, for your family, for mankind. Maybe, for each of us, some possibly difficult, but wonderful changes are ahead.

Relinquishing Control to the Sovereign

Providing food, clothing and other trappings of life certainly requires diligence and effort. That work (working at a job, participating in a family business, tending a garden, raising livestock, paying bills, etc.) is something we **must** do for our

own benefit, for the benefit of our family members, even for the benefit of the church and for society in general. There are plenty of scriptures that condemn laziness and condone hard work, but we need to be careful that we do not let our participation in that work skew our understanding of God's provision and his hand in our lives.

The Real Provider

Despite the diligent efforts required on our own part, the Bible is clear that it is the Lord himself that is the true provider, and the one that even gives us the strength we need each day.

Psalms 18:30-32

(30) As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

(31) For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

(32) It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

Clarity is provided in the book of Job, when God asks Job the rhetorical question, "Who provideth for the raven his food?" (Job 38:41). Does not the raven find his own food? Does not the raven do the work of scavenging to feed itself and its young? It may seem so, but Job (as God was reinforcing to him) and the psalmist knew that though it seems the work to provide for one's own survival **is** the provision, that is not true. It is **God** who is the provider even when human or animal work is involved.

Psalms 147:9

(9) He [God] giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

When we acknowledge the Lord as our true provider, our emotions will align with that, and praise to him will naturally flow from us.

Psalms 28:7

(7) The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Even when we do the necessary work of assessing our situations and making plans for the future, it can subtly result in pride. This is said well in James 4.

James 4:13-15

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 we see one of the passages instructing us to work diligently to provide for our physical needs. Here Paul makes this statement, "... study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." Rest assured, that although God expects us to be faithful in what we have, and to be diligent in how we use our time and energy, it is **he** that is the ultimate provider, and this provider cares for us beyond comprehension. Jesus taught this in Luke 12.

Luke 12:4-7

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Every Breath that I Take...

I like the Wissman Family song titled, *Lord I need You All the Time*. The song reminds us that our very breath and every new day is a gift from him.

Every breath that I take
comes straight from you
Every day that I live
you've given me too
A place in my heart
Your presence divine
Oh yes it's true
Lord I need you all the
time

Without your love
Without your care
Where would I be without
a prayer
Jesus you touched this
heart of mine

Lord I need you all the
time

Every breath that I take
comes straight from you
Every day that I live you've
given me too
A place in my heart
Your presence divine
Oh yes it's true
Lord I need you all the
time

Without the shelter of your
hand
Satan would sift me just
like sand.

But safe in your arms, I'm
doing just fine.
Lord I need you all the
time

Oh yes it's true
Lord I need you all the
time

Every breath that I take
comes straight from you
Every day that I live you've
given me too
A place in my heart
Your presence divine

Oh yes it's true
Lord I need you all the
time

Qs - Our Provider

Take no Thought for Your Life

Both Jesus and Paul taught that we ought not worry about this physical life. What about Jesus teaching to the disciples that if they put seeking the kingdom first, that the physical needs of theirs would be met too? What did he mean by that? Was it a truth for the Little Flock only? Are there cross-dispensational aspects to this as well? Look first at Luke 12.

Luke 12:22-31

(22) And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

(23) The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

(24) Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

(25) And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

(26) If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

(27) Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

(28) If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

(29) And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

(30) For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

(31) But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

And then we have Paul's writing for the dispensation of grace, where he writes this:

Philippians 4:11-13

(11) Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

(12) I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

(13) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

And just a few verses later he reminds us that it is **God** that is the supplier of our needs:

Philippians 4:19

(19) But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

With the teaching of Jesus in the flesh, it looks like meeting physical needs is dependent on setting priorities appropriately, but the teaching of the ascended Jesus through Paul looks like the meeting of physical needs is unconditional. But is that the case? God's provision is **not** conditional, just as it is not conditional for the animal kingdom. The point of the teaching is not a cause and effect, or a do and be blessed idea like much of God's dealing with Israel, but rather a perspective setting admonition. Set our hearts and minds where they ought to be, not on the (needed) material things of this world. Look more closely at both of these passages.

Context is critical in understanding these concepts. In Luke 12:22, Jesus is telling the disciples to "Take no thought for your [their] life, what ye [they] shall eat; neither for the body, what ye [they] shall put on." This is right on the heels of the his delivery of the parable of the *Foolish Rich Man*. In the parable of the *Foolish Rich Man*, an image is painted of a man focused on accumulating material goods in belief that his destiny was in his own hands. But in the end, "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

This passage in Luke, contrasts that man (with his affection set on earthly, material things), with the way in which God intends man to live (with his affection set on things of eternal value - "rather seek ye the kingdom of God").

Also, the concept conveyed in Luke 12:22 ("Take no thought

for your life”) is nearly identical to that in Philippians 4:6 (Be careful for nothing). It is not that he don't have a thought in our heads about our physical lives - what we will eat or what we will wear (we may have to work very hard to keep food before our families and clothes on their backs). **But we are not to be full of care, we are not to worry, nor fret, nor be anxious, nor be preoccupied with these things.** “The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.” (Luke 12:23).

This ties in with the teaching of Jesus at the end of Luke 22, where he points out:

Luke 12:34

(34) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

When you think of someone that has a special treasure, unless they are trying to guard it as a secret, they probably talk about it often. It is the center of their thoughts and actually, that is where their heart is. These passages in Luke and also Paul's letters teach that our treasure is not to be here on earth.

The idea of putting God *front and center* in our lives is nothing new, nor is it at all odd when we understand just who God is and why we even exist.

Paul provides significant clarity for the Body of Christ on this subject in Colossians 3, which will be addressed in the next section.

A Focus on Spiritual Things

With less concern about the necessities of life, we can more easily shift our focus to things above. Paul writes that we are to seek those things which are above and to set our affection

on things above, not on things of earth.

Colossians 3:1-3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Our Affection

The word *affection* could use some definition here. Today, we may tend to think of affection as *tender care* or *love*. That, however, is not what is at the heart of this word nor does it help much in understanding the import of Colossians 3:2. Webster says that the word means “passion, but more generally, a bent of mind towards a particular object.” He further states, that “affection is a permanent bent of the mind, formed by the presence of an object, or by some act of another person, and existing without the presence of its object.”

So our bent of mind and associated passion is to be set on things above, for we have been risen with Christ. And that affection is not something temporary. It is a “permanent bent of the mind” even when we cannot directly see many of those “things above,” for the affection exists “without the presence of its object.”

Note also, that Paul did not write that we are to set our “affections” (plural) on things above, but our affection (singular). It is interesting that the two places in the Bible

where the word is plural, it refers to evil passions (“vile affections” “affections and lusts”). Probably even more to the point, is that if we have a bent of mind, a passion toward something, it probably is not much of a passion if it competes with other passions. Jesus taught this concept to his followers when he physically walked the earth.

Matthew 6:19-24

(19) Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

(20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

(21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(22) The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

(23) But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

(24) No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

King David was a good example of demonstrating a single-minded passion for the Lord. Look at how his affection for the things of God drove him in the use of his wealth.

1 Chronicles 29:3-5a

(3) Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the

holy house,

(4) Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal:

(5) The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. ...

When we have a permanent, passionate, bent of mind, toward the things of God, toward things above, not things on earth, great things begin to happen in our service to the Lord, and our lives in general.

Qs - Focus & Affection

With a shift in focus away from the things of this earth, our prayer life will also shift in focus, not neglecting the things of this physical life, but elevating the importance of spiritual things as modeled in Paul's prayer in Colossians 1.

Colossians 1:9-12

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Qs - Prayer

Vain Deceit

In the same letter to the Colossians, Paul gave some enlightening teaching (Colossians 1:19-2:15) about who we are in Christ. In the midst of that teaching he gives a warning about what he calls “philosophy and vain deceit,” “the tradition of men,” and “the rudiments of the world.”

Colossians 2:6-10

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

We need to take to heart what happened to us when we put our trust in Christ, and the Holy Spirit baptized us into Christ, separating us from our sins, making us complete in Christ. There is much in this world that tries to convince us to live like the world, or even to live with a form of godliness, but not after Christ.

Verse 6 teaches that as we received Christ Jesus by faith, we ought to walk in him by faith. One implication of this, is that we live not after “philosophy and vain deceit,” “the tradition of men,” and “the rudiments of the world.” It is not natural for us to walk by faith. It is supernatural; it is of and by God.

2 Corinthians 4:15-18

(15) For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

(16) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

(17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

(18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

We are to accept the Biblical truths of who we are in Christ, of what we were created for, of what God's purposes for us are, of how he wants to continuously transform/refine us. The deceit of the world is shouted so loudly in our ears, and often so convincingly, that it can be difficult keep our eyes focused on "the things which are not seen" - things eternal.

So then, be wary of the conventions of the world, lest we be spoiled by the enemy. "Walk ye in him [Jesus Christ]" by faith. "Walk circumspectly," looking around with wisdom and discernment.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Qs - Deceit

10,000 Reasons

Consider the focus that is in view in the Matt Redman song,
10,000 Reasons for my heart to sing.

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

Chorus:

*Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name*

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

Chorus:

*Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name*

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore
Forevermore

<Chorus>

Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Jesus I will worship Your Holy name

The ups and downs of life can serve, if our hearts are right, to remind us that we have 10,000+ reasons to praise and worship the Lord.

Psalms 147:1

(1) Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.

The verse quoted in the previous section is so telling too, that the very purposes that we go through various experiences

(pleasant and otherwise is for the purpose of drawing thanksgiving and praise to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:15

(15) For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

Starting NOW, we can sing God praise unending. Ten thousand years and then forevermore. “Whatever may pass, And whatever lies before me, Let me be singing, When the evening comes.” That sounds wonderful. But in order to really do that, we need to have our attention captured by the Lord and things above; we cannot be weighed down with the cares of this world. So how do we fulfill our family and community responsibilities and survive or even thrive on this earth, and still keep our minds, hearts and bodies focuses on things above?

Philippians 3:17-20

(17) Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

(18) (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

(19) Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

(20) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ

The Bible has a lot to say about where our thoughts ought to rest: “let this mind be in you...,” “be of the same mind...,” “mind the same thing,” “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...,”... It is a matter of perspective that is based on

knowing and believing God's word. It is a matter of intentional thought and focus.

The LORD, whose name is Jealous

This brings us to the point that we may want to really examine our relationship with our Creator. God did not simply set things in motion and walk away. That is clear from the very creation account in Genesis and also throughout the Bible. God speaks of a very intimate relationship that he desires with us.

Lukewarm or Hot?

Have you ever watched a newly engaged couple? When you talk with them, what do they talk about? Their fiancée. When they decide what to do tomorrow, what is the focus of their plans? Their fiancée. When they decide where to sit, what influences their decision? The nearness of their fiancée. What is life about? Their fiancée. You get the picture. Are they hot, cold or lukewarm about their fiancée? **HOT!** The intensity and focus of an in-love couple is somewhat similar to what God intends that we have with him. Song of Solomon paints some of this picture for us.

Hot, cold or lukewarm? Lukewarm means that the temperature has fallen off, the passion has faded, the focus is no longer clear and singular, the intensity has waned. God hates lukewarmness. He does not merely wish things were better, he hates lukewarmness. It's like expecting a hot beverage, only to find when you draw the liquid in, it is tepid - lukewarm - and "ugh" is your response. God indicated of the Church of Laodicea, that their lukewarmness makes him sick to his stomach, so to speak. The actual verse is shown below, and note that God's response is not to "spit" as some new Bible

translations say, but to “spue” or to spew, which is to vomit (expel from the stomach). His reaction is intense.

Revelation 3:16

(16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Maybe exploring the idea of jealousy would help to understand this better. Jealousy can be a bad thing, or a good thing. When it comes to fidelity, jealousy is a good thing. God indicates that he is a jealous God.

Exodus 34:14

(14) For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Deuteronomy 4:24

(24) For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Waning Fidelity

Jealous simply means to be quick to understand a rivalry and its implications. As God fully comprehends the nature and implications of disobedience or waning fidelity, his responses historically have been intense. Look at the intense response God had in his relationship with wayward Israel. Do you see the jealousy, the requirement for fidelity, the extremely strong thinking, emotion and action, the desire for a true and deep relationship?

Deuteronomy 32:16-22

(16) They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

(17) They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods

whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

(18) Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

(19) And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.

(20) And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

(21) They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

(22) For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Isaiah 42:8

(8) I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isaiah 48:10-11

(10) Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

(11) For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

Jesus expressed this concept in Matthew 10 where he made the following statement

Matthew 10:37-39

(37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

(38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

(39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Two Masters? Don't be Fooled

In the Dispensation of Grace that we now live in, God does not enact the punitive measures that he did when he was working with Israel as a chosen nation. What God thinks and feels about divided loyalties, however, is no doubt the same (for he is the same yesterday, today and forever). His restraint during this dispensation does not suggest that he is no longer a jealous God. He still wants our undivided attention, our utmost love, our fear and worship.

Part of the problem for us, is that we tend to think we can have one foot in both camps. Serve the Lord and cater to the enticements of the world - that doesn't work. In fact, if we think we **are** having both right now, we are deceiving ourselves, for our hearts are really in one camp or the other. Although a saved person's eternal state is settled permanently (eternal in heaven with the Lord), from a practical day-to-day perspective, there can be a heart quite distant from God. We are either all in or all out - whether we think so or not. If we are not all for God, we are really serving that other master – the master that brings grief, sorrow and death.

Matthew 6:24

(24) No man can serve two masters: for either he will

hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Let us **not** be like the church at Laodicea, evoking a nausea or vomiting type of response from our creator. Rather, let have a intense, sweet relationship with him as he intended. In this crazy world that can be tough.

We can have victory in this by God's strength and the transforming power of his word. To have the relationship God desires with us, we must have both feet in his camp, we must truly be devoted to him, he must be priority number 1. We need to saturate ourselves with his word, that its transforming power would draw us closer and closer to him and farther and farther from the world. Heed, again, the Lord's thought on a *lukewarm* relationship.

Revelation 3:15-16

(15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

(16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Qs - Our Jealous God

A Good Soldier

When a person puts their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there are quite a few things that happen to him in an instant, and there are a number of roles that God calls him to right then and there. One of those roles is that of being a “soldier of Jesus Christ.”

A good soldier, is not lukewarm, but is ready for the battle, focused on the goal, intent on following the instructions of his

leader, and as 2 Timothy 2 states, set to “please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

2 Timothy 2:3-4

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Paul used quite colorful and powerful words to describe this.... “entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.” The affairs of this life sure can be an entanglement.

Note also that the verse also indicates that the entanglement can interfere with pleasing God. That is not a *pleasing* that has anything to do with salvation. Rather, it is a *pleasing* that has to do with whether or not God approves of what we are doing (whether or not what we are doing is agreeable to him).

Colossians 1:10-11

(10) walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

(11) Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

It is fitting for one who loves the Lord to refuse to “entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

We are definitely in a war of sorts. The 3-fold enemy is the devil, the world and our own flesh, and as a soldier up against a crafty and complex foe, there is plenty of hardness to endure.

When we disentangle, shifting our focus and our bent of mind, our affection, to things above and to the Lord himself, we can echo with Paul, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”(Romans 8:18)

One of the problems with getting entangled “with the affairs of this life” is that it can cause us to be too physical minded, meaning we can loose sight that we are up against a foe that is not necessarily physical.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Ephesians 6 reinforces this as well:

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of

peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

So let us be good soldiers of the Lord, with our eyes wide open, fully and always aware that we are in a battle, a battle not against flesh and blood, but against a foe skilled in trickery and deception, who gains an edge in his battles when we are entangled in this things of this life.

Qs - Good Soldier

Quit You Like Men!

There is a phrase in the business world applicable here, “get it to 212.” There is **not** a lot of power in water that is 50F or 100F or even 211F. But get it to 212F, and - wow - the power in that extremely hot water, now producing steam, can power a locomotive!

When we think of this in the context of being part of what God is doing on this earth, the following quote from Eric Ludy seems appropriate to consider:

It seems to me that we spend much of our spiritual energies trying to explain why the God of Elijah, Sampson, David and Paul seems to have lost his muscle in our modern age. Did he grow tired of performing heroics? Did he wax feeble after all these years of running this whole universal show? Could it be true that God has really lost his muscle? Maybe it would be more accurate to say God lost his men.

Even in Ezekiel's day, this was a problem, as evidenced in Ezekiel 22.

Ezekiel 22:30

(30) And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Although this may be nothing new, it seems that it is more so with each passing generation.

Paul gives this related instruction in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 16:13

(13) Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

The word *quit* in that verse needs to be understood as it was in then past. Webster gives as the 3rd of 11 definitions for the word:

To carry through; to do or perform something to the end, so that nothing remains; to discharge or perform completely.

So to quit you like men, means to quit only when that objective is completed, to quit only after victory, to NOT quit before the goal is achieved.

1 Corinthians 16:13 should characterize us. Similar to the picture of a good soldier, the Believer is to be watchful (walking circumspectly), and standing unmovable, nothing shaking his faith, and with strength and vigor completely fulfilling God's expectations of him.

Qs - 212F

A Focus on Ministry and the Gospel

Just a few verses after that admonition in verse 13, Paul encourages the believers to support those that were working with him in the ministry, and it is interesting to note how he described the household of Stephanas that was helping in the ministry.

1 Corinthians 16:15-16

(15) I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

(16) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

Addicted

Paul said that those folks had “addicted themselves to the ministry.” **Addicted**. There is nothing negative in this use of the word. They habitually devoted time, energy and attention to the ministry, and as Webster’s definition adds, “by constant practice”.

Didn’t the house of Stephanas have to make a living? Didn’t they have to wash their clothes, prepare their meals, rear their children, pay their taxes, take care of their animals? Didn’t they have all kinds of general life demands on their time like we do?? Undoubtedly!

And yet, they “addicted themselves to the ministry.” What level of passion for the Lord is necessary to become addicted to his service, or to be addicted to HIM? If we don’t have that, how do we get that?

We don't know exactly what things looked like for the house of Stephanas, but it would be a good idea to ponder what their lives may have looked like, where they spent their time, money and energy. It would be interesting to know just what their *addiction* looked like. Questions at the end of the booklet encourage you to think what it would look like if you were *addicted* to the ministry.

Followers of Paul

Some might think they do not have a ministry. That is faulty thinking. **Every** Believer has a ministry.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

(17) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

(18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

(19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

(20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

When we look at the life of Paul, it would be grossly incorrect to say he had no ministry. Indeed, he was instrumental in what God was doing. You could say Paul was *addicted* to the ministry! With that fact in mind, consider what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4.

1 Corinthians 4:16-17

(16) Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

(17) For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

A few chapters later, he asserts this again

1 Corinthians 11:1-2

(1) Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

(2) Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

Paul had an intense, purposeful, ministry that dominated his life, and on multiple occasions he instructs us to be followers of him. What do you think of that? Do we “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus?” Do we with Paul, even though we already know the saving power of his resurrection, do we desire to more deeply “know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death?” (Philippians 3:8-10)

When we count all things but loss, those things certainly do not occupy prominence in our minds. This mindset allows us to focus on things eternal and on the purposes God has for us on this earth. It better equips us to be ministry minded, indeed enabling us *addict* ourselves to the ministry.

It is good to remember too, that **you** may be the only *writing* of Paul that some in the world will ever *read*.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

(2) Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

(3) *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Awake Thou that Sleepest!

This world has an amazing power to lull us into a daze, into a somewhat mindless routine of rush, rush, rush. It is not that generally folks are lazy; no, it is that they are in a sleep of sorts, deadened to the fervent life that God desires for us.

Ephesians 5:14-16

(14) Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

(15) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

(16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Colossians 4: 5

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Awake thou that sleepest! It is critical that we are living alive unto God, aware of what is going on around us, alert to the intentions God has for our lives (and of the Devil's desire to interfere with that).

Romans 6:4

(4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead

by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:9-11

(9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

(10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

(11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Qs - Ministry Focus

Living with Your Whole Heart

Being *alive unto God* is a rich concept. Part of being alive unto God, is being able to understand what we have in the Lord, and to being able to view the world from a heavenly, eternal perspective. 1 Corinthians 2 contrasts this state with that of the natural man (one who is not a Believer).

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

(12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

(13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

(14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

We can see in verse 13 that the things of God are according to

the wisdom of God, not according to the wisdom of man. That implies that many of the things God would tell us, teach us, want for us, are contrary to man's wisdom. That is, the things of God are foolishness to the natural man.

We still have that old man in us, albeit dead. God tell us (in the Romans 6 passage quoted earlier) to "reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." So we can be in the body of Christ and still be living like we are under the control of our old master - sin. We can be saved, and yet not be living alive to God. Romans 6:4, 9-11 were looked at already a few pages back, but it would be good to briefly look at verses 4-13 together.

Romans 6:4-13

(4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

(5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

(6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

(7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

(8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

(9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

(10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

(11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

(13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

This section is titled ***Living with Your Whole Heart***, and as a precursor to that discussion, it is important to well understand the implications of the words God used here in this Romans passage.

Truly Alive

The word *alive* (verses 11 & 13), seems simple enough. Webster's first definition is simply, "Having life, in opposition to dead; living." But Webster gives deeper insight, when he also defines it as "In a state of action; unextinguished; undestroyed." We are to be that, unto God. More insight yet is found as Webster further defines alive as "Cheerful; sprightly; lively; full of alacrity (a cheerful readiness or promptitude to do some act; cheerful willingness; as, 'the soldiers advanced with alacrity to meet the enemy.')

God has an expectation of us here. In reckoning ourselves alive unto God, he expects that we are not only dead unto sin, but that we are in action, cheerfully, excitedly ready and willing to serve the Lord wherever and however he may lead? There is a whole heartedness at the core of being alive unto God.

Whatever we do, be it tending to the necessities of life or the service and worship of God, we are instructed "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). So there is a sense in which even the day-to-day tasks of life are to command great energy,

cheerfulness and even passion from us. A few verses earlier in chapter 3 we see similar sentiment:

Colossians 3:15-17

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

This booklet is **not** an argument for passivity nor dereliction of duty, nor shirking of responsibility. Rather it is a call to reassess priorities, and an encouragement to see through the occupations of the world to the realities of our home eternal in the heavens, to our *real life* that Paul said is “hid with Christ in God,” and to live this life with fervor, fullness and heartiness.

Weary and Heavy Laden?

Some of us are weighed down with heavy physical burdens, or emotionally traumatic circumstances (past or present). Even in those agonizing situations, God is still God, Jesus Christ is still our Saviour, the Holy Spirit is still our Comforter. We still have a home eternal in the heavens. Paul said, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18) Does that trivialize human suffering? Absolutely not. It does show us, though, that we can have hope, and it reminds us where our thoughts, emotions and energy ought to be focused.

Horatio Spafford, lawyer and real estate investor (1828-1888) lost his son, and shortly afterward lost his fortune in the 1871 *Great Chicago Fire*, and then in the wake of that tragedy, lost his daughters (and almost his wife too) in a tragic sea mishap. Just days later, he penned the hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*.

That great hymn reminds us of the way it **can** be when he penned, “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

Helen Lemmel’s hymn, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” reminds us **how** this can actually come about: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in his wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of his glory and grace.”

As a point of encouragement, Paul posed this rhetorical question:

Romans 8:35

(35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

And his answer?

Romans 8:37

(37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

More than conquerors? Indeed!

More than Conquerors

When our affection is set on things above, we can live not only with an eternal hope, but but we can “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” and “do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”

Maybe your health is such that the biggest task for the day is taking your regimen of medications or herbs - that’s all you can muster. Or maybe getting dressed takes most of the day’s energy. Or dealing with the physical or emotional pain leaves you weak. Is that the focus of your life? It may be the primary activity of it, but is it your life? NO. “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3). What if we did not take our hardships as if they were *just part of life*, but we labored through them “**as to the Lord?**” What if even the painful and seemingly insurmountable situations were faced “heartily” and “in the name of the Lord Jesus?” If that characterizes how you face the trials of life, praise the Lord, for that is a victory he intends for you. That is part of the fruit of the Spirit – longsuffering with joy.

Even in sickness and sorrow, we can “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” as Paul prayed for the church in Colossians 9:10-11.

“We are more than conquerors...” Hang on to that truth.

So, let us, no matter our circumstances, reckon ourselves **alive** unto God - cheerfully, excitedly, wholeheartedly ready and willing to serve the Lord, our affection on things above, not on things of the earth.

How counter to the ways of the world.... How unnatural....

“Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

1 Corinthians 1: 20 & 25

Qs - Whole Heart

The Conclusion of the Matter

Immediately after Paul provides comfort and encouragement regarding our eternal state and the ultimate victory that we have over sin and death “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” he penned this admonition:

1 Corinthians 15:58

(58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

What is the conclusion of this whole matter?

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be

evil.

Fear God and keep his commandments. Wow, it comes down to just one short sentence! If we understand those words in that summary sentence, awesome. But those words are quite loaded. Just to scratch the surface, here are a few related thoughts.

Keep His Commandments

God gave many commandments throughout history, some are still applicable today, and some are not. There is no willy-nilly, pick-and-choose option for us in determining what commands are applicable today. The apostle Paul made the details of this subject quite clear. Many great articles, books, etc. are available to help understand this (for example: Things that Differ, by Cornelius Stam, and The Mystery, by Joel Finck). Read your KJV Bible and just let it say what it says, without forcing it to conform to preconceived notions. Consider these verses:

1 Corinthians 14:37

(37) If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:2

(2) For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Quite simply, every command that God gave mankind, that is still in force today, is reaffirmed in the writings of Paul to the Gentile church. That should make it easy to discern. Do you think there can't be much there? To the contrary, there are over 275 unique imperative statements in Paul's letters

(statements that include words such as abhor, abstain, bear, bring, cleave, do, flee, glorify, reprove, seek, prove, provoke, purge, show, demonstrate, teach, obey, honor, serve, submit, etc.). And Paul said that the things he wrote “are the commandments of the Lord.”

Fear God

God listed this (Fear God) first of the two duties. It is a precursor to keeping his commandments. It is preeminent. It is the heart of it all.

Our behavior ought to be such that we are keeping God’s commandments - what the life of a believer should look like from the outside. But what of the inner man? Fearing God, is to be at the heart our relationship with the Lord. In the following paragraphs, we look at what the life of a believer should look like from the inside.

When we fear God, things fall into place.... Priorities change. The focus of life shifts. Our passion rises. Our affection moves to things above. We begin to see things from an eternal and heavenly perspective. We can endure hardship not only “as a good soldier,” but as “longsuffering with joyfulness.” Life becomes very different as the glory of God so dwarfs the devil, the world and the flesh.

To Truly Know God is to Fear God

The fear of God is based on knowledge and deep understanding of who the Lord is. For the fear of the Lord to reside in us, we need to deeply know the amazing awe-inspiring, awe-demanding character and trustworthiness of God. The Bible describes God as ALL powerful, ALL knowing, ALL wise, ... The depth of his love and the magnitude and

purity of his attributes are beyond comprehension.

Our Terrible God (huh?)

The Bible uses some language we would not likely use today to describe the Lord, language that communicates that his grandeur is so intense that it could only be described as **terrible**. Here are several of many such passages:

Deuteronomy 7:21

(21) Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and **terrible**.

Deuteronomy 10:17

(17) For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a **terrible**, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

Nehemiah 1:5

(5) And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and **terrible** God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

Nehemiah 4:14

(14) And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is **great and terrible**, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

Nehemiah 9:32

(32) Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty,

and the **terrible** God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

Job 37:22

(22) Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is **terrible** majesty.

Psalms 47:2

(2) For the LORD most high is **terrible**; he is a great King over all the earth.

There are many more similar verses. Are you seeing the picture? God is **far far** more than awesome.

Ephesians 3:14-19 indicates that we should be able to comprehend (and deeply know) the love of God. The magnitude and purity of most of his attributes, however, are more than we can comprehend. In fact, contemplation of any one of his attributes, ought to quite overwhelm us (even moreso than when an angel appears in his glory unto a man). Having an increasingly deep grasp of that, is *the fear of the Lord* (which, by the way, both the Psalmist and Solomon said "is the beginning of wisdom" -- think of the implications of that!).

In Fear, but not Afraid

In addition to the word *terrible*, God freely uses the word *fear* to help us understand his, for lack of better word, *intensity*. Interestingly, God wants fear from us. He does not want us afraid, but in fear. That may seem like an odd sentence, or an

odd concept, but notice that when men of God have the fear of the Lord, the opposite of being afraid occurs: Proverbs 14:26 says that “in the fear of the LORD is strong confidence.” Like God is not willing to share his glory with any other, he wants that fear for himself too (and rightly so). He does not want us giving that fear (worship) to others.

Isaiah 42:8

(8) I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isaiah 8:13

(13) Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Some of this Biblical language about fear, terror and dread can be foreign to us. In this Isaiah 8 passage, the instruction to let God be their fear and God be their dread, is in the context of urging Israel to be strong, confident and unafraid in the face of a powerful confederation of kings coming against them. Let **him** be your fear, let **him** be your dread.

So just what is this godly fear anyway? Earlier it was noted that this fear is based on a deep understanding of who God is. But on the most simple level, it is a recognition of huge glory or power differential, which elevates the other relative to self. That is worship. When that is intense, and significant, God calls it fear, dread, trembling, awe, ... As an example, consider the recorded instances of angels appearing unto human beings. The angels needed to speak the words, “Fear not,” for it was a natural, automatic response to fear/worship those beings, but worship and fear are reserved to God alone. He does not want us to tremble before others.

Deuteronomy 20:3

... Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.

It is vital that the object of our trust in this life is worthy of our trust, and how much better if the object of our trust is far more than *just* trustworthy. He is the truly awesome..... or even awefull one that loves us beyond comprehension and for whom nothing is too hard. When God is so huge in our minds and hearts, where is there room for fear and worry in this life?

Jeremiah 32:17

(17) Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee

Fear God. See him as he portrays himself in his Word. Trust him. He is worthy. As the Psalmist indicated, that godly fear of the Lord, is absolutely foundational for all else that comes forth out of wisdom. Let us turn our eyes toward him, and let that drive our view of this world, of our lives, our attitudes, our daily activities.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of earth [including fear and worry] will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.”

Qs - Fear

The Whole Duty of Man

Amidst Job's groanings, there are many things for us to learn. In Job 7, the first half of verses 6 and 7 provide some reminder

of the transient nature of this earthly life. It may seem long and arduous at times, but in the grand scheme of things, it passes quickly and is gone in a moment.

Job 7:6a

(6) My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle...

Job 7:7a

(7) O remember that my life *is* wind...

We ought to have a crystal clear perspective on what this life is all about and how to make the most of the brief time we have on this earth.

What then is this life? Life is about God Almighty, not about us. Of course we matter. We have immense value - creatures created in the very image of God. He loves us beyond our comprehension. God does not want us, his special creations, to simply live an existence here on earth and then someday enter eternity where we will be with him forever. No, he wants something **much** more, and he wants it now.

The Bible makes it clear that God desires us to have an amazing, sweet, awesome, overwhelming, all-encompassing relationship with him. He wants to be our strength, our peace, our hope, our joy, our rest, our light, our refuge, our defender, our help, our guide, our salvation, our friend, our Father, our righteousness, our redemption, our consolation, our glory, our life, our all, our Lord, our God.

2 Corinthians 5:17, says that for the Believer, "behold, all things are become new." Do we see that in our lives? Maybe to see ALL THINGS new, we we need to shift our focus moreso to things above, living with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength alive unto God?

When we allow God's word to take hold of us, it will effectually work in us and have a powerful transforming effect.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-13

(11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children,

(12) That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

(13) For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

With his word working in us we **can** have a life that is characterized by love, joy, peace that passes understanding, even longsuffering with joyfulness, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

We **can** have a life characterized by being content in whatsoever state we find ourselves.

We **can** have a life characterized by a sense of awareness and wakefulness regarding the things of the Lord, where we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.

We **can** have a life characterized by an understanding of where this life fits into God's plans, and how he wants us to live each day (even with its demands and its sufferings).

Our lives can be truly amazing despite the horrendous hardships that can, and often do, come our way. But that victory absolutely requires that we set our affections on things above, allowing our view of the Lord to so overwhelm us that the things of earth are put into an eternal perspective.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

Please don't let life just push you along and swallow you up. Let your mind be renewed daily by the Word of God, pray for ever deeper understanding, and seek God's wisdom in purposefully choosing the path for your life, and then “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5)

Echoing the words of Paul in Ephesians 1:17-20, I pray for you: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”

What better way to conclude than to quote again the conclusion of *the Preacher*.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Qs - The Conclusion

God does not want us, his special creations, to simply live an existence here on earth and then someday enter eternity, where we will be with him forever.

No, he wants something **much** more, and he wants it now.