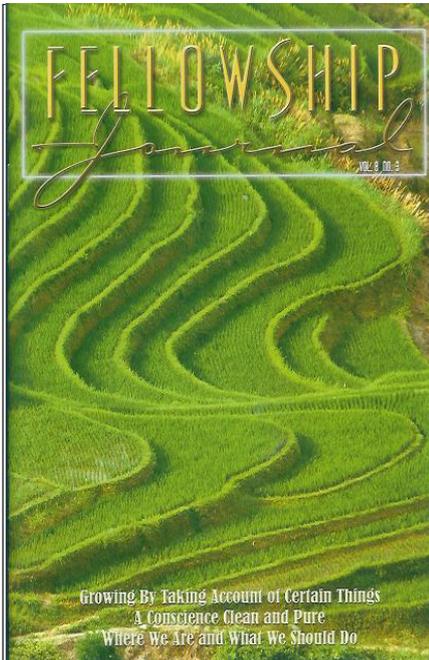


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Contents

Take Account of
These Things
(Philippians)

A Cleansed and Pure
Conscience

Where We Are and
What We Should Do

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...we are more than
conquerors through
Him who loved us. For I
am convinced that
neither death nor life,
neither angels nor
demons, neither the
present nor the future,
nor any powers, neither
height nor depth, nor
anything else in all
creation, will be able to
separate us from the
love of God that is in
Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37b-39

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

FORBEARING AND TAKING ACCOUNT

**LET YOUR FOREBEARANCE BE KNOWN TO ALL MEN.
THE LORD IS NEAR.**

The first thing Paul tells the believers in this section is that the believers should let their forbearance be known (4:5). Why? Because the Lord is near! In this portion on the practice of the church life, Paul simply begins by saying, “Dear saints, as Jesus lovers, as those in the church life... Let your forbearance be known to all men.”

What is forbearance? To forbear is to put up with, to refrain from responding to what is unreasonable. In the church life, we have to put up with many seemingly unreasonable things. What is the secret, however, for proper growth? Firstly, it is to give up your rights. In other words, everyone should know they can take advantage of you, because you have given up your legal right to make any claims for yourself. We should even declare to all the saints, “If I have any food in my refrigerator, it’s yours! If I have a couch you want, feel free to come take it!”

Allow me to tell you a story. In my house there are many vases, but two of them I appreciate in particular. One day, after being gone, I discovered the two particular vases were both missing. I searched through the house, but could not locate them. I had told the saints that if they saw anything in my house, they should feel free to take it, but I had a particular experience in buying these vases with someone, so they meant more to me than the others. Because some knew I wouldn’t protest, however, they removed them to their homes! If we want to be good saints in the church life, others should know that everything you have is theirs, because you live for them and your existence is for them. Whatever you have belongs to the church!

Paul's word, however, is that our forbearance should be known to ALL men, not just to our close companions. Those who are somewhat new in the church life should realize this about us. In fact, *all* people who are acquainted with us should know this about us! They should know that there is a place that they can get whatever they want. But who can do this? Our realization in connection with this is that the Lord is near. If you ask, "Why me?" then you should also ask "Why NOT me?" and realize that if it comes to you, it is the Lord's mercy. The reality that backs this up is the truth that the Lord is near.

Some may ask, "Does this mean the Lord is near as in distance, or near as in time?" It is true in both senses. He is coming, and He is with us in our spirit. These facts are the secret to our practice of the church life by way of forbearance. In other words, people should know that if they need food or shelter or help, they can come to us! If you are such a person, then you know you are proper before the Lord. This may be a difficult matter for some, but remember, the Lord is near! When things become impossible, there is a strength within you that enables you to remain joyful even as others seemingly take advantage of you.

In one sense, I miss those two vases that disappeared from my home, but I can still declare that you all are free to come to my home and take whatever you want. In this process, we experience and learn that the Lord is near.

The reason the Lord seems remote to us is because we are so much for ourselves. When we live so much for the church, for the saints, and for others, the Lord becomes very near to us! We sense that He is near, that He is with us, and that He is coming soon.

**IN NOTHING BE ANXIOUS, BUT IN EVERYTHING,
BY PRAYER AND PETITION WITH THANKSGIVING,
LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD**

As those before the Lord, Paul's word to us is that that we should be anxious in nothing. Instead, in everything we should make our requests known to God by prayer and petition with thanksgiving (4:6). If we do this, Paul tells us that the peace of Christ will guard our heart and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

This matter of prayer is one of the most neglected among us, for we are much more prone to discuss and consider things than to pray about them. Even among the churches the matter of prayer is not as strong as the matters of teaching, preaching, mutual encouragement, or prophesying. Kneeling down daily to pray simply doesn't seem to be commonly practiced among us. How many spend some time each day to speak to the Lord?

When we use the word “pray,” what we really mean is speaking to the Lord. The simple matter of speaking to the Lord is woefully short among us. I believe that if I were to ask how many among those hearing me right now pray a half hour every day, that none would be able to raise their hands. It is because of this that we lack spiritual strength.

I am thankful that when I was a young believer, I was raised to pray and that I built up the habit of prayer. Gradually, the matter of prayer became a part of my person. Even as I do many things, I pray. I hope this would become an integral part of the daily life of all among us.

Prayer equals fellowship with God, so Paul realized prayer was crucial. It is one thing to let others see your ability to forbear; it is another to be a praying person. As we exercise forbearance, we need to be praying. (Actually, in order to be those who can forbear and be free of anxiety, we need to be those who in all things are making our requests made known to God by prayer and petition.)

Prayer stresses fellowship, while petition refers to intercession about something in particular. Good prayer involves petition, and proper petition generates prayer. They both end up with thanksgiving.

For instance, as you spend time in the Lord’s presence, certain specific matters will come up in your heart, and you will begin to petition the Lord concerning these matters. If we are practiced in this, the work of the Lord will never merely become a movement among us. Instead, what the Lord really desires will be coming out among us, because of our prayer. If we want to be those who are carrying out the Lord’s move and work, we must be those who are in fellowship with Him through prayer.

I would hope that when asked why you choose a certain way in your life, you would be able to say, “Because the Lord has told me!” The Lord must be able to move among us. Thus Paul first tells us that, as individuals, we must be pure before the Lord. We should not be for ourselves. Instead, we should be able to do what others cannot and show forbearance towards all. In the church life, we must have Christ. He must be our focus. Practically, I suggest every one among us spend time to pray at least one-half hour a day.

As you do, I also suggest that you learn to repeat the Lord’s name to keep your being focused upon Him. (It is simply too easy for our mind to wander.) For instance, you might pray, “Lord Jesus, I love You. I really love You. Lord, even as I say I love You, my mind may be traveling somewhere else, but I love You. I love You so much.” As you repeat such a thing, you are brought into a kind of quietness. That is a powerful thing. Once you enter into such a quietness, you will find it easy to pray for prolonged periods of time.

In addition, I also suggest that you read a few verses from the Bible out loud. This also will quiet your person and make it easier to pray. Singing a song to the Lord can also help in this way, particularly if you

sing some portion over and over. For instance, if you were to sing, “O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me, and all things else recede” or “Each day let Thy supporting might my weakness still embrace; my darkness vanish in Thy light, Thy life my death efface” you may find those words are good enough. Then you can pray, “O Lord, each day, Lord, I worship You for Your supporting might.” A few verses or lines from a hymn can help bring your being into a quieted state. Without experiencing this, it will be difficult for you to know what it is to unceasingly pray. You may be able to do many things, but the Lord will remain on the outside.

**AND THE PEACE OF GOD,
WHICH SURPASSES EVERY MAN'S UNDERSTANDING,
WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR THOUGHTS
IN CHRIST JESUS**

Paul's word is simply that we should come to the Lord in all things and trust Him in all things. If we can do that, the peace of God, which surpasses understanding, will be ours (4:7).

We all have our kind of understanding. In Greek the word is “nous,” which is a word referring to our person. Our understanding is basically our person. As believers, our nous has to be renewed, for our nous is our being. Madame Guyon wrote in a hymn, “What e'er thou lovest, man, that too become thou must; God, if thou lovest God, dust if thou lovest dust.” Whatever you feel to be of value is determined by your nous (your person), and determines your nous (your person).

As we pray in the midst of all which concerns us, peace comes in. This peace is not just any peace; it is the peace of God! The peace of God is far beyond our understanding. A certain sister's understanding may be, “My husband is going to serve the Lord full-time. Therefore, I need a job.” As she prays and fellowships with the Lord, however, the peace of the Lord comes in, which is something that goes beyond her understanding. She may realize she should not get a job, and neither should she tell her husband to get a job. She may not even be able to say that she fully trusts Him, but she can praise the Lord and thank Him, for the peace that goes beyond her understanding has come in.

Whenever we are touching the Lord, everything is fine. If we are anxious, that surely indicates Christ is not involved in whatever we are doing. We may have our ideas of why we should do something or not do something, and we may even pray according to those thoughts, but once we touch the Lord, we are touching the One who has a plan that is greater than ours. As we pray and petition the Lord, this One who has the understanding that is higher than ours knows how to work with us. Eventually we become so thankful that everything is in the Lord's hands, and to this the Lord says, “Amen!” This is when we really experience the peace of God.

It is not that the Lord answers our prayers and petitions in the way we naturally desire. He answers us according to our need of transformation. We may have a way and a need, and that need and way may be proper, and we may pray for it, but the Lord desires something much higher for us than we realize. Therefore the Lord may not answer our prayers in the manner we desire, and yet we will experience the peace of God which surpasses every man's understanding. This peace will guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

When this becomes our situation, no matter what happens, we will be peaceful. It may be that what the Lord works out looks very different from what you prayed for. You may not get what you want, but the peace is there. You find your heart and your thoughts are guarded in Christ Jesus, because you have a prayer life.

Prayer and petition always brings in thanksgiving, even though often the Lord's answer is something beyond our understanding. I may like to see a particular brother come to Cleveland and become operative. Then he comes to me and tells me he feels the Lord is leading him another way. If I am praying and petitioning the Lord, however, there is peace. My mind and heart are guarded in Christ Jesus. I find I am able to feel peaceful about the situation.

Things rarely happen the way we want to see them happen. It doesn't matter how much you pray. It doesn't matter how much you petition. It doesn't matter how much you give thanks. Remember that the peace of God will surpass your nous, whatever the level you are. For instance, I am in my level of nous, which might be much more spiritual than many of you. Even so, the Lord does many things beyond my nous and yet grants me a real peace in Christ Jesus.

What is the secret of the church life? Number one, as far as your own testimony goes, everybody should know they can take advantage of you. If we feel bothered that our way may get changed, that perhaps indicates it SHOULD be changed. Second, we should pray and petition the Lord, realizing we should experience the peace of God, even though the Lord may not answer our prayer according to how we pray.

Many Christians are smart and therefore do NOT pray. Instead, they just get the thing done and then tell the Lord what they have done. "Lord, whether You like it or not, it is done already!" We may thus seem to be more successful in what we attempt, but we will not gain Christ in the matter! You have to pray and allow Christ to govern everything, from your haircut to your manner of life and your labor. You must let Him know what bothers you and what you desire. You should let everything be known to the Lord. You should also realize that if you ask for a snake, the Lord will not give you a snake, but will give you a fish (Matt. 7:10; Luke 11:11). If you pray for a stone, the Lord will give you bread instead. It seems, however, that we are professionals at asking for stones and snakes. The

Lord, being merciful, however, gives us fish and bread. We may be disappointed today, but in eternity we shall be very thankful He did not give us what we prayed for! The process itself, however, is precious, because it causes us to come to know the Lord. Eventually, as we go through this process, we find we love the Lord more. Your prayers may not be “answered,” but you will have the peace of God that passes your understanding.

I hope all among us would pick up the habit of praying a certain amount of time every day. Spend a little time in the Word or sing a hymn just to quiet yourself down. If your mind wanders, just repeat something until your mind comes back. Prayer is the second crucial matter Paul is concerned with in this section.

FINALLY, BROTHERS, WHAT THINGS ARE TRUE, WHAT THINGS ARE DIGNIFIED, WHAT THINGS ARE RIGHTEOUS, WHAT THINGS ARE PURE, WHAT THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHAT THINGS ARE WELL SPOKEN OF, IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF ANY PRAISE, TAKE ACCOUNT OF THESE THINGS

The third thing Paul speaks of in this portion of the Word is aimed at our spiritual maturity.

Paul begins by writing, “Finally, brothers, what things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous...” (4:8). This is one category. He continues, “what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of”. This is a second category. In this series of threes, he concludes with, “if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things.” All these matters indicate we should grow.

WHAT THINGS ARE TRUE

The first thing that marks our arrival to the church life is how true we are. When we first come to the church life, we don’t know how to make up a prayer or a testimony. After a little while, people learn how to perform. When you first come to the church life, however, nothing is faked or forced. The root of your Christian life must be this virtue of “true”. That which is true knows nothing of display or pretense. When we first come to the church life nearly everything we do is true, for we do not yet know how to act as what seems to be expected. We need to have such an experience at the onset if we want to know life.

When I first began loving the Lord, I believed every word. When I heard a person tell us we shouldn’t read the newspaper, I really took that word. Then, when I was in the church meeting hall, I saw some brother sitting in the deacon’s office reading a newspaper! I got so bothered. I mentioned this to the brother who laid down this rule for us, and he

answered, "O, he was trying to find gospel material." I took his word as true, whether it was or not. I even took it when a brother told me that another brother looking at a movie poster was actually looking to the heavens!

Throughout our lives, we should never drop this matter of "true" that began with us in our church life. We should never allow ourselves to become cynical. The more you grow and progress in the church life, the more you will discover how corrupted things can be. No matter how spiritual we may become, our sinful part also develops. Those who are not of Christ can develop, just as that which is not of Christ can develop. Paul says in the beginning, "What things are true...take account of these things." Remember how you began.

WHAT THINGS ARE DIGNIFIED

"Dignified" is a word connected with the thought of what is revered or to be worshiped. It thus carries with it the sense of expressing God. As you are "true" and genuine when you come to the church life, the first thing you pay attention to out of your genuineness is whatever truly expresses God. You may feel a certain prayer or testimony really touched you because that prayer or testimony expressed God.

When this Greek word is applied to us, it denotes the things having value in God's creation which are noble, fine, holy, and worthy of respect. For instance, as you pass by, you may see a brother drop something into an offering box. Respect it, because they are doing a holy thing. Don't say, "The Bible said, 'Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing'. Here I am, seeing you, and you dropped it in any way!" Such a person lacks the ability to appreciate that which is dignified. There are many holy, divine things happening around us in the church life, and they should be respected and perceived in light of their dignity. Whatever is truly of God is certainly something pertaining to this Greek word rendered "dignified."

The richer human beings become, the more they tend to feed their fleshly desires. Therefore they buy items for their own comfort. Instead of appreciating these types of things, which are in contrast to what is dignified, we should appreciate what is worthy of our respect as something which expresses God. Those who are genuine pay attention to what is dignified, rather than who has a name or who owns what. While some may give their attention to those who have a name, the genuine will appreciate the testimony of even the most lowly person, if it expresses God. If you develop this ability, you will grow!

One time I heard two young brothers who happened to be at the same conference. As they were talking, one commented on a certain brother's prayer which was particularly filled with the Spirit. The other

brother responded that he too was so helped by that prayer. When I heard these brothers fellowshiping in this way, I was happy, for these two brothers were learning to appreciate that which was dignified, rather than how to associate with some brother who was a “somebody” in the church life so their own futures could be brighter. We all need to maintain our genuineness, but we should also progress to appreciate the heavenly things manifested through the saints.

We who serve should not impress you with our talent or knowledge of the Bible, but with something with us that we can call “dignified”. We should be approachable, and yet we should also be manifesting a kind of dignity that issues from God’s life within.

WHATEVER THINGS ARE RIGHTEOUS

The same Greek word is used in the seventh verse of the first chapter of this book. We may say righteousness is God’s nature in action. When God works in man and imparts His nature into man, we see a man become righteous with God’s righteousness!

The Lord is the King of Righteousness. This indicates that righteousness comes from the Lord and the desire, move, and work of the Lord. In other words, what is seen is not merely a man behaving properly. Rather, we see a man filled with the divine operations. “Right” does not only denote the right thing to do. “Right” does not even denote only something done according to the moral standard of God. “Right” denotes the movement or activity that comes about from abiding in God and in His economy. That is the truly righteous! We must have the ability to appreciate the operations that come forth from God’s divine operation within the saints, even though they may cost us a lot.

I appreciate how my wife has never discouraged me from following the Lord, even though it has meant she has had to bear with much. The reason she has been peaceful is because, by the Lord’s mercy, the actions I have taken have been righteous. It is God who has been operating. The wife of the Lord’s worker must have a real ability to admire the work of the Lord! How wonderful it would be if the wives of such brothers would tell them not only, “I love you,” but also, “I am so happy you have grown and have been undergoing more transformation!” Wives of such husbands must develop the ability if they are going to stand with them. They have not married someone common, so they must know how to take account of the righteous operation going on within their husbands!

The most blessed brother or sister is the one who develops among a group of people who know how to appreciate whatever is righteous. In some cases the older ones do not want the younger ones to grow. In other cases the young saints themselves do not wish to discover such righteous operations among themselves. In other words, they may appreciate

someone's love to the Lord and faithfulness to the church, but should anyone desire to follow the Lord by dropping everything else, they will ask, "Are you sure?"

I have known some brothers here for four decades now. I hope they have appreciated how the Lord has grown in me. They should not have the attitude that, since I am now 70 years old, I no longer need to progress. I still have a long way to go, because the operations that produce the righteous acts are still at work within me. If you serve others, you should also be able to appreciate this change in them. It is not just that you open your home to young people and spend time teaching them and so on. It is that you see their change and know how to appreciate it. If someone comes to you and tells you something they appreciated during their reading of the Bible, you should be able to appreciate that as something righteous, and speak appreciatively of it. Tell that young person, "I hope you all have more of the Lord's speaking like this to bless the whole church!" Can you appreciate when people grow?

So the secret of growth is that it must begin with recognizing what is genuine (true). Then you begin to appreciate whatever that is of God (dignified). Whenever something of God is displayed, you begin to appreciate that there is a lot of operation of the Lord in that person (righteous).

Though these are the basic matters, you can never get away from them. Always appreciate what is true, what is dignified, and what is righteous.

WHATEVER IS PURE

Paul continues by writing, "What things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of..." In writing this, he takes us to another level. These matters touch upon constitution. In a certain sense, the more we grow, the more we can become impure! Those who are young and simple are also more likely to be more pure. The brothers who are more experienced in the things of the church life begin to look at things from other angles. They may look at certain brothers and consider how to work with them so that they may become the future of the Lord's recovery, rather than simply appreciating them as lovers of Jesus. How we view others is based upon who we are.

The real test of our growth is our purity. Paul the apostle was very pure. When he looked at the saints or the churches, he never looked at them as anything other than beloved. They were his joy and his crown. He had no expectations other than that they would become Christ's. Don't think this is such an easy matter! Those who have grown into operations often have to deal with hidden motives that arise. I may even unconsciously find myself expecting a louder amen from saints whom I have

raised up. The young workers may desire to see a certain number of young people show up for an event. If that number shows up, their faces will show it, because their goal was accomplished. Such a thing is not according to the principle of “whatever you sow, you reap.” We labor and the Lord gives the growth. It is fine to pray for 1000 attendants, but we should be just as thankful if some other number shows up. We work with people, not numbers!

Sometimes when I visit a church an elder will say to me, “Our attendance is normally better, but a certain family is sick, another is visiting out of town” and so on. He may even say, “The brother who really can testify is not with us today.” I am not an inspector, I am a brother. I have not come to see how well someone has done his job! But in the second stage, “pure” matches “true”. When we begin our church life, what marks us should be the word “true”. The first thing that should mark us in the second stage, however, is “pure”. Don’t let things defile you. Don’t let things replace Christ. Don’t let other things come in and take His place.

Some places decide who they will fellowship with based upon what materials are being used. Isn’t this impure? In one city two brothers were having very good fellowship until one raised the issue of what materials one of their locality’s was using. Then one of them noted, “You have the fragrance of a certain worker.” That comment indicated something impure, for what difference would being affected by that brother make? Whether one worker or another, if they all love and serve the Lord, what difference should that make?

Why do some places feel they have to “blow the hair” to find fault? It is because it is very difficult to remain within the process of growth and still maintain being pure. You must be able to say, “I have my limitations just as others, but I love Jesus Christ.” We need to take account of those who have such a quality.

WHAT THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHAT THINGS ARE WELL-SPOKEN OF

Furthermore, in the church life there are many lovely things that happen as a result of the divine operation. Due to the Lord’s mercy, there are many lovely brothers and sisters among us. Take account of such saints.

What is true has its eventual manifestation in what is pure. What is dignified has its expression in what is lovely. The inward operation of righteousness becomes the outward manifestation of “whatever is well spoken of”. You must take account of such things throughout your entire Christian life. You never graduate from these, for these are your growth. Eventually a testimony is produced (“that is well spoken of”).

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF ANY PRAISE

What does Paul speak concerning next? He writes, “if there is any virtue”. This refers to the divine attributes. Next he writes, “if any praise,” which results from the living out of the divine attribute as human virtue. When these things are present, you know something has been constituted in you of God which is being lived out. Anything that constitutes you with divinity and is lived out becomes praise.

TAKE ACCOUNT OF THESE THINGS

We need to take account of these things; this is your maturing experience. I hope you have somewhat received a picture of what is conveyed here. We begin our Christian life so simply, and eventually we become a praise. In the process there is so much for us to go through. We ourselves need to be dignified. We need to appreciate the element and the sense of being dignified. We should have righteousness, and we should appreciate the righteous. We should appreciate the operation of the divine life within the brothers that causes them to be burdened and to exercise.

Even as you grow, however, keep the principle of being so pure, just as in the beginning when you are so genuine. Don't be so smart in the church life, trying to be somebody.

Do not neglect whatsoever is lovely. Among the local churches, we need this the most. It's too easy for us to become unhappy with one another. Appreciate the loveliness among us.

Furthermore, appreciate whatever is well spoken of. Broaden your ability to appreciate things. Don't be narrow in your interest. Take account of whatever is being well spoken of.

Eventually, we will be able to take account of whatever virtue there is, and whatever is of praise.

Your Christian life begins with “true” and it manifests with virtue and praise. The first stage of the Christian life is marked by our paying attention to such simple things, while the second stage is more focused upon things which are somewhat higher.

With simple things, number one, you start with true.

- *Titus Chu,*

Shared with those in the ten-month labor, June 1, 2004

BOASTING IN ONE'S WEAKNESSES

Second Corinthians 12:9 says, "He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me." Have you seen this? Weakness is not something that one should lament over or weep about. Weakness is something that one should boast in. You may have said, "Thank and praise the Lord because He has made me fail miserably"? You thank and praise the Lord for giving you patience, but have you thanked and praised Him for your impossible temper? Have you thanked and praised Him for your pride? Have you thanked and praised Him for your jealousy? Have you thanked and praised Him for your uncleanness within and for your sin? If you have these problems, you should thank and praise the Lord for them. The first thing you must do is realize that you cannot make it. The second thing you should do is give up trying to make it. The third thing you should do is thank and praise the Lord for not being able to make it. Hallelujah! I cannot make it. Hallelujah, I cannot make it!

Why did Paul say, "I will rather boast in my weaknesses?" The word "boast" is "glory" in the original language. Paul said that he considered his weaknesses to be his glory. This is because his weaknesses afforded Christ the opportunity to manifest His power and the opportunity for this power to tabernacle over him. Christ's power cannot tabernacle over those who do not have any weaknesses. Only those with weakness can experience the tabernacling of Christ's power. I would rather boast in my weaknesses because my weaknesses afford the Lord an opportunity to manifest His power and to do something in me.

Brothers and sisters, do you have a sin which you cannot even confess? Do you have something which you cannot consecrate to God? Do you have a hindrance which you cannot remove? Is there any grace which you miss before the Lord? What are you going to do? Are you going to be sorrowful?...The mistake of the young man [in Luke 18] did not lie in the realization of his impossibility but in his failure to realize God's possibility. The mistake of the young man did not lie in his own inability but in his failure to apply God's ability. It is not a sin to discover one's own weakness, but it is a sin to refuse to believe in God's strength. It is not a sin to be unable to give away one's money, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can enable a person to give away his money. It is not a sin to have a bad temper, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can become one's patience. It is not a sin to have an insurmountable sin, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can overcome such a sin for a person.

It is a glorious thing for a man to realize that he is helpless...

Watchman Nee, *The Overcoming Life* (Collected Works, vol .24, 66-67, LSM

Cleansed and Pure in Light of God's Plan

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith... (1 Tim. 1:5)

...having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19)

Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience... (1 Tim. 3:9)

When considering the matter of the conscience in the believer, we may ask, "Does the conscience change in its operation over our Christian life?" And if we have read of the conscience in First Timothy, we may wonder at the difference between holding a "good" conscience and holding a "pure" conscience.

When you look at the matter of the conscience, on one side you have God's Law (see Romans 7:7-24, where Paul speaks of the struggle between the Law, his desire to do good, and his sinfulness). We must realize that as believers, however, we also have God Himself within with His intentions. Those who do not have the Lord Himself only have His Law and/or that which matches that Law within them as creatures created by the One who gave the Law. The conscience corresponds in some way to the Law within all people, and it watches over their actions and demands they do something about the things in their lives that are not according to the Law's standard.

The word conscience literally means "with knowledge." Even if others do not know, we know, and we know God knows. That is enough! Therefore the conscience is a tremendous matter, and its importance cannot be overstated. Psychologists recognize that guilt on man's conscience is one of the basic problems of human existence. Sigmund Freud determined that man's experience is centered around the interaction between himself (ego), his conscience (super-ego), and his sinful drives (id). The Bible does not agree with his analysis of the origin of these three, but it does agree with the fact that man's daily struggle is between himself, his sinful nature, and his conscience. Sin cannot be eradicated, and neither can conscience go away, for it is part of our heart. Therefore this battle within man can never be stilled.

Even if it could be argued that an accusation on someone's conscience was NOT according to God, the conscience of every individual must be honored, for we take the conscience to be God's representative. To each one of us it is our guide to what God expects of us. When we go against it, we experience a "fearful looking away to judgment" (Heb. 10:27). (Conscience is adjusted by knowledge as we receive revelation or further understanding of God, but one person's comparative freedom in some area cannot be imposed upon others or even introduced to them if their consciences are vulnerable. See 1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14 and 1 Cor. 10:23-33. Paul warns that the consequences could be disastrous—1 Cor. 8:11.)

People basically have three choices as to how to deal with the guilt in their conscience brought about by their sinful deeds:

1. ATTEMPTING TO DENY THE CONSCIENCE BY DENYING GOD

First, there are those who try to convince themselves there is no God (or that if there is a creator, this creator is not personally interested in man). People like this convince themselves conscience is something that came from society and man's rules. This type of person tries to reason away feelings of guilt. In effect, he denies his conscience and becomes cynical and hardened, for such people have given up their hope of being God's creation. Eventually their conscience becomes glazed over. They turn away from its exposing and seal it away as in a tomb. (Our conscience never really stops "radiating," but it can become so deeply buried as to seem inert.) These people believe they have been liberated from guilt and inhibition, when in fact they are more exposed to the damaging effect of sin, which now reigns unrestricted.

2. IN MISERY RECOGNIZING ITS UNREMITTING CLAIMS

Second, there are those who agree with the accusations of their conscience, but have no way of resolving them. They agree there is a God they are accountable to, and that their conscience is speaking the truth. They acknowledge they are guilty of doing evil things, but feel helpless to do anything about that fact. Like the person in Romans 7, they know it is proper to always do what is right and good, but realize they cannot fulfill that obligation. Because these people are honest they are most miserable. They may hold onto some vague hope that in some way they might redeem themselves, but they must bear a heavy load until the longed-for opportunity arrives. In a negative sense they are seeking ones, because they long for relief from their constant burden. Since conscience tries to get us to accept responsibility for things in our lives not being as they

should, and since no one can afford to accept sin's penalty, these people will be tempted to seek relief by reasoning away their guilt, like those in the first category, if they do not discover the Answer.

3. DISCOVERING RELEASE BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS

Third, there are those who agree with the accusations of their conscience, acknowledging there is a Creator "with whom we all have to do" (Heb. 4:13), and who have finally discovered God's way of salvation. These people are those who have discovered that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins, and have embraced Him and come to know the efficacy of His blood in washing away all the load and stain of their sin (Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; John 1:29). Their conscience has been cleansed. They can boast of a "good" conscience before God and man.

A SECOND CATEGORY AMONG THOSE WHO HOLD A GOOD CONSCIENCE: THOSE WHO HOLD A PURE CONSCIENCE KNOWING GOD'S PURPOSE

Besides just knowing Christ has died for our sins, we also must come to know what God's purpose is for having done this. As those created by God, we must discover what God's intention and will for creating us and saving us is, for we now "doubly" belong to Him (Psalm 100:3; Rev. 5:9)! We should thus be able to testify that we are in what God desires for us, or else our conscience still has a problem. We may be able to testify that Jesus' blood has cleansed us from our sinful offenses, but can we testify that we are living our lives according to what God wills for us? Can we declare our life is now purely for God and His will? If we can, I believe we are those who can stand before God, the angels, and all mankind as one who holds a "pure" conscience, in spite of whatever shortcomings we might still possess.

Our living should not simply be according to right and wrong. A soldier gets a handbook about everything that is expected of him. He is to behave a certain way towards an officer; he is to wear his uniform a certain way, and so on. When the time comes, however, he must act as a part of the overall move of that military force. Matters must be put in perspective. If he is ordered to shoot his weapon, he cannot refuse because it is not clean enough, or because he forgot to salute his officer earlier. He cannot freeze up due to some remembered breach of protocol. He must take that order as sufficient indication his service is accepted and expected. (This does not mean things are overlooked; it means that we must learn to live according to God's plan and will, realizing our personal conduct will be dealt with in the process, and that our dealing with our conscience is not an end in itself.)

When we become clear about God's purpose, our conscience also

becomes aware of this higher plane of expectation. Our whole being becomes readjusted, and our conscience comes into a fuller function. It is no longer merely attuned to what is offensive under God's moral law; it becomes our witness within as to whether we are living according to God's highest desire for our existence!

To have a cleansed conscience is important. We should apply the blood of Jesus for our offenses so we may maintain a cloudless fellowship with our Father. But we eventually should have the boldness to declare, "I know why I am alive. I am living according to the purpose of my creation. I am fulfilling the obligation of my existence. I am not cheating myself nor am I holding anything back from God. I am standing upon this earth as someone who is wholly for His purpose." If we can say this, I believe we are those who can confidently say we have a pure conscience, or that our conscience is peaceful in recognizing we are pure. Many may be able to joyfully say, "I am not going to hell. God must accept me into His presence. Jesus has died for my sins. Hallelujah!" They have a cleansed conscience. Praise the Lord for that. But some can say further, "I am living according to the purpose for which God has me here on earth." Until we are marching in God's army alongside those who likewise have given their lives to live according to His purpose, we know in our conscience that something else is mixed in, indicating our existence is impure. We are still holding something back from the One who has redeemed us by His blood. (In other words, idols are stealing away something that should be God's.)

When everything is truly "in" God's purpose and nothing more holds us back from completely following Him, our inner witness will grant us boldness to testify there exists nothing in our heart to prevent God from gaining His full satisfaction in us. At that point, we can claim with a pure conscience that we are for God and God alone. Until then, we should keep ourselves under the blood of Christ for whatever we are holding onto besides God, maintaining an honest fellowship with Him until He is able to purge out whatever is frustrating us and we are able to stand purely for Him upon the earth.

Until we can say, "I know what God's purpose is, and I am standing on this earth for that," we cannot peacefully say our conscience is pure. We must be able to say, "I am living on this earth for God's purpose. I am not just here so I can have a good Christian life. I am not just here for my own good or the good of my family. I am not here just so I can be comfortable or gain something for myself. God is doing something, and I am one with what He is doing. My life, my living, and my standard are now according to *that*." Such a person can say he has a pure conscience, for his living and standard are according to what he knows to be in God's heart.

Our conscience is set to the standard that has been revealed or accepted in our hearts as being authoritative from God. If the standard you

have for yourself is to live a life that does not offend God, then your conscience will operate according to that standard, and that standard can always be maintained by the blood of Jesus. God will always receive us based on what was accomplished through His death upon the cross. God, however, desires to bring us into the highest existence, which is a life purely lived out in His plan. Unless we can say we live such a life, our conscience will be aware that we still come up short when it comes to the best God has for us.

We have to allow the Lord to be the Lord of our conscience just as He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8). The Sabbath was created for a purpose which He had the right to define more clearly. It should be the same with our conscience. The Lord has the right to be the Lord of our conscience. There will be times when He may say, “Stop being so concerned about this or that. You have My blood! Go forward. Do not allow Satan to divert or hinder you by accusation and guilt. Come forward by My blood until you arrive at the altar of incense where you can operate with Me for My purpose.” [Heb.4:9-16. The goal of our coming into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus is that we might co-operate with Christ at the incense altar, not merely abide in the Holy of Holies.]

THE CONSCIENCE THAT USHERS US TO THE GOSPEL MUST ULTIMATELY BECOME
THE CONSCIENCE THAT USHERS US INTO GOD’S PURPOSE

This present generation has been lied to more than any before it, which means it is the most confident and comfortable in its function apart from God. To them God has never felt less necessary, and conscience has never been more easily cast off. More than ever, young people have been “educated” by what is declared “scientific” or “progressive” or “out-moded”. As Satan’s lies grow in number and sophistication, the role of the conscience becomes more easily quashed.

Touching people’s conscience thus seems to grow more difficult with each passing generation. Those whose consciences have remained sensitive need to know that the blood of Jesus can cleanse them from every sin (Rom. 11:32; 1 John 1:9). Eventually, however, we need to find out from God what His purpose on the earth is, and give ourselves to it. That should become the standard of our living, rather than simply what is right or wrong. We should be able to tell the Lord, “You got me here, and I now realize Your purpose is why You created me. That purpose has become the standard for my existence. One day, if not yet, I am going to have the boldness to declare before all creation, and even before You Yourself, ‘I gave myself for Your purpose. I consecrated myself to follow You and to live according to what You are after. I refused to settle for anything less.’” Those able to declare this can surely say they live their lives in a pure conscience.

- *John Berglund*

What We Have Been Given and How We Should Operate

I. What We Have Been Given

Let me just speak to you in a very simple way. I would like to give you a view of what the Lord has given to us, and how the Lord desires us to operate. This is very simple, and once you have heard it, you may say, “Oh, I know all of that!” Yet for some reason we are short of the reality of these things.

A. We Have Been Given the Lord Himself

Firstly, the Lord has given us Himself. We have the Lord Himself. No one would disagree with that, right? The moment you were saved, what did you receive? Whom did you receive? You received the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing more and nothing less. If we deviate from “we are only for the Lord Jesus Christ, we are only for this Savior, and we are only for loving Him,” then we know something is wrong with us. We should know that the day we were saved, we were saved by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. And the day the Lord comes back, we all will see Him. At that time, all our successes will not mean anything. All our “medals” will not mean anything. The only thing that will matter when we see Him is how much Christ we have gained throughout our life. I am pretty sure that when we see the Lord Jesus, some of us will experience much more joy, much more honor, and much more glory compared with others. Do you know why? Because throughout their lives, some were endeavoring to gain Him and only Him. So you realize with the Christian life there is nothing but the Lord Himself. Then all the other things we have received develop based on this fact.

1. The Lord is Christ

When we see the Lord, we need to see at least three aspects: the Lord is Christ, the Lord is life, and the Lord is Spirit. Brothers, do you realize whenever you talk about the Lord, these three things are involved? Who is the Lord? The first aspect is that He is the Christ. In other words, He is the anointed One in carrying out God's economy. Whenever you say, "Oh Christ," do you realize that it does not merely denote a person; it denotes a person with divine heavenly commitment? For example, when you say "George W. Bush," that indicates a person. When you say "President Bush," that indicates a person with a commitment. He has a job with a commitment, and he needs to fulfill that commitment. We need to see that the Lord has a commitment. The Lord is "the Christ," which means He is fulfilling the divine heavenly commitment.

You know brothers, when we say "Lord Jesus Christ," we are indicating three things: He is the Lord, He is Jesus, and He is Christ. The title "Lord" shows His place. He is the King of Kings; He is the Lord of Lords; He has dominion over the universe and over everything. The name "Jesus" means that He is God with man. He is the very God who has become our Savior. Then "the Christ" means that He is carrying us according to God's economy. Christ means the anointed one. The point I am making here is that we have been given the Lord. The Lord is the Lord Christ, which means that He is carrying out and fulfilling His economy.

2. The Lord is Life

Now, in order for Him to fulfill His economy, He is our life. This is the second aspect of who our Lord is. Christ is our life. Colossians 3:4 tells us, "When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory." Our eventual appearing with Him in glory is a matter of life. So brothers, you need Christ. You need life.

3. The Lord is Spirit

Then the third aspect is the Spirit, which is the reality of life and substantiates life. Let me illustrate in this way. Americans like bloody meat and we call that "juicy steak." When I first came to the United States, I couldn't believe that when I would slice my meat, "blood" would come out. I was amazed that people would really eat this. How could that be? Until one day I tried it, and I realized, "Oh, it tastes so good, better than Chinese food." What is that juice? I'll call that "Spirit." As the juice substantiates the flavor of the meat, the Spirit

substantiates the life. Without eating the meat, the “food” cannot be experienced by us. But when you take it in, it becomes your enjoyment, your strength, and your source of energy, and it causes you to be different. What is that? That is the Spirit. The Spirit is life digested. When we say we need to give ourselves to something, what we give ourselves to is Christ. When we say we need to enjoy something, what we enjoy is life. When we say we need to substantiate something, that is the Spirit.

Let me give you an illustration. Physically, when we are working very hard, if we do not eat properly we will begin to feel chilly, weak, and even sick. It doesn't mean we do not have life, but we are short of the vitality of life. Spiritually it is the same. If you do not stand one with the Lord for His purpose, if you are not taking in Christ as life, if you are not enjoying the juice of life which is the life-giving Spirit, then you will feel cold, chilly, and without strength. You will feel almost that you are spiritually sick.

B. We Have Been Given the Word

All of this that we have shared so far is what is given to us when we received the Lord. But furthermore, we have also received the Word. The Lord has given us the Bible. Don't you appreciate it? You should appreciate it. Now that you are saved, you have the Bible as God's word to you. Recently when some brothers visited Uganda they took along Bibles to distribute. What they discovered amazed us all. The people in Uganda were so desperate and so hungry for the Bible that they were grasping for a copy of their own as the brothers were handing them out. But here in the United States we don't have a problem to own a copy of the Bible. Our problem is that we have a Bible, but never read it. In fact, we may have many copies of the Bible, but the problem is that we don't read them. I tell you, brothers, if we don't read the Bible, something is wrong.

The Lord has given us His speaking. It is not something ethereal. It is real. It is something for us to enjoy. What is that? The Bible. The Bible is our food. The Bible is our strength. The Bible is our inspiration. The Bible is our regulation. The Bible is our living. The Bible helps us to walk on the healthy pathway. Once you have the word in this way, then when you walk into the meeting you will become such a life supply. If many saints throughout many homes are enjoying the word in such a rich way, then how rich will all our meetings become!

The word is interesting. Without the word, everything becomes dry. With the word, there is substance. Without the word, we merely talk about spiritual things. With the word, when we talk about spiritual things, we have the reality

and the enjoyment of the spiritual things. The word gives us inspiration. The word gives us subjective sensational experiences. That's why in our meetings we may have so much praise offered according to the verses we have read. Even a small group of saints who are in the word can have an effect on a larger meeting. Anyway, brothers, treasure the Word. God has given us the Lord who is Christ, life, and Spirit. And God has given us the Word for our inspiration, for our subjective experience, and for our leading, guiding and regulating. Praise the Lord for this!

C. We Have Been Given the Saints

Then more than this, the third item the Lord has given us is many saints. Sometimes I feel that the Lord has been very generous by giving us all the things we have fellowshiped so far to meet our needs. I wonder, do we appreciate them adequately? And even more, the Lord has given us many, many dear saints. Yet sometimes when I see very young brothers, I wonder, "Are the other saints too old for you?" But for some reason, the young saints like the older saints. It's interesting. No matter what their age, the brothers just love to be with other brothers. The Lord has given us the saints. As long as we don't make divisive issues, then every brother is lovely. Actually, every time we meet a Christian, that one is lovely. It is when we make an issue that there is a difficulty.

For instance, suppose you see a person and ask, "Are you a Christian?" He says, "Yes." Then you might ask, "Do you love the Lord?" Again, he says, "Yes." Oh, then your spirit is just happy. Then he might ask, "Where do you meet? I am a Pentecostal. Do you speak in tongues?" Already you feel awkward, but you may answer, "No, I don't." Then he might reply, "Oh, you've got to speak in tongues." All of sudden, a wall has risen up. Why? Because an issue was made. The issue can be big, or it can be small. Right? You might say, "I am so young. I don't like to be with the older ones." Then the older ones might say, "I am so old. I don't like to be with younger ones." These are all issues.

In practicality, we have to be one with one another in order to express the oneness of Christ in reality. Think about it. Sometimes the Lord is very humorous. Do you know why? The Lord often puts two very different brothers together. For instance, one brother may be "sweetly firm." The other may be "firmly sweet." One smiles first, but he is very firm. What he wants is what he wants. He is sweetly firm. And the other brother at first appears to be very firm, but eventually people find that he is very sweet. When people first see him, they may think he is very tough until they really get to know him, and then they find that he is such a sweet person. The Lord has put the sweetly firm

and the firmly sweet together, and asks, “My children, can you love one another?” It is interesting. The Lord gives us all kinds of different people, and then says, “I would like to build you brothers and sisters together as My corporate testimony in localities. This is My Body.”

D. We Have Been Given the Environment

Now in addition to these three items given to us, we should add one more. The Lord has also given us the environment. Do you realize, with Christians there is nothing called “unlucky.” With Christians, we can only say, “The Lord has His government.” For instance, I love Cleveland. But because of my allergies, one thing I dislike is the trees. If Cleveland were a desert, how good that would be. Look at my eyes; they’re all red. But the Lord would say, “I like to put you in Cleveland.” Do you realize that nothing happening to you is lucky, and nothing happening to you is unlucky? Nothing happens to you that should cause you to say, “Oh, the Lord loves me so much.” And nothing happens to you that should cause you to say, “Oh Lord, why do You hate me?” The Lord never hates you. The Lord always measures the best to you. So eventually you have to learn that such matters as where you buy a house, who will be with you in the same district, how the meetings are, these are according to a governmentally arranged environment. No complaints. The Lord has given to us the environment.

II. How the Lord Desires Us to Operate

Before we continue we need to remember, what are the things we received? Number one, the Lord, who is Christ, life, and Spirit. Number two, the Bible. Number three, the saints. Number four, the environment. This is what the Lord has given to every Christian. But even further, the Lord has brought us into a kind of living for us to exercise. What is this living? Number one, the Lord wants us to have the church life.

A. We All Must Have the Church Life

However, the church life is very hard to define. When I use the term “church life,” I have one kind of understanding. And when you use this term, you have your understanding. Whatever the definition is, we have to know there is the church life. Many terms have this difficulty. For example, the word “freedom.” Everyone has his definition of “freedom.” To some Americans, freedom means having the right to burn the American flag. But to other Americans, this is very offensive, and freedom to them would be having the right to sue the flag-burner. They each are exercising their freedoms, but their understanding is different. But whatever that is, freedom is still there.

1. In the Church Life We All Enjoy the Meetings

So now, what is the church life? I don't know how you define it, but remember that as long as you are a Christian, you must have a church life. Each local church will have the church life based on who their constituents are, based on their environment, and with the freedom for every member to enjoy their church life. Praise the Lord. Yet in enjoying the church life, we should not be flying in the air all the time. We must be very practical. With whom are we meeting to have the Lord's table? Treasure them and enjoy that meeting, because that is your church life. In the church life, we need the meetings.

2. In the Church Life We All Must Function

In addition to the meetings, we also need the functioning. What does function mean? It means to fulfill your portion. The more we practice speaking, the more of what we speak will become our own riches. By exercising in life, functioning with truth, and functioning to encourage the saints, we will be functioning in a way that will give us the highest spiritual constitution. For instance, when you read the Bible, does a particular verse touch you? Then you should function: "Hi brother, let me tell you, this week I was reading a verse, and that verse was so good! It said, 'Brothers, love one another,' but I forget where it was. I just love this verse. 'Brothers, we should love one another.'" That's very good functioning. And by having shared that, you yourself were educated. So you may pray, "Lord, from now on I want to love all the brothers and sisters. I want all the brothers and sisters to love me. I want to have a church life focused with love." You see, functioning is very helpful. So you need the meetings, and you need the functioning.

3. In the Church Life We All Must Have the Serving Life

Then in the church life, you need the exercise of the serving life. Serve, don't be a guest. I'd like to ask you a very interesting question. Are you a guest or are you a member? Let me tell you the difference. A member is a serving one. Those who arrange the chairs are serving ones. Those who merely sit on the chairs are guests. Those who prepared the snacks this morning are serving ones. Those who merely ate them are the guests. But we hope all the "guests" can also become "hosts." Do I make sense? On the one hand every guest is to be honored. Yet to be an honorable guest can only last for a while. Eventually you must become a serving one. Even the new ones many times want to participate by bringing food to the love feast, or helping in the practical serving. By bringing something to the meeting they are partaking of the serving life in the church life. This causes a real sweetness in the church life.

B. We All Must Experience the Growth in Life

Then we should also have the aspect of growing in life. In the church life you need to grow. You can't just be in the church life year after year, and always remain the same. You need to be different. Suppose someone 20 years old was still only as big as the day they were born. Wouldn't everyone be very worried? In the human life, a person grows in stature, grows in knowledge, and grows in human experience. Spiritual things are exactly the same. You need to grow. Don't just say, "I am in the church life, and everything is fine." Yes, as long as you are in the church life, in a sense you are protected. But the church life "protects" you for you to grow in life. If you are in the church life, year after year you should be growing, and this growing is related to the Spirit, to the Word, and to being with the saints. When I am in my spirit, then I have the life element for my growth. When I am in the Word, then I have the riches for my growth. When I am with the saints, I have the environment for my growth. Now I can grow in a healthy way.

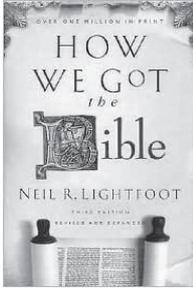
C. We All Must Be Perfected

Along with our growth, we all need the aspect of being perfected. We may not appreciate the importance of being perfected, but actually if we want to grow properly we need to be perfected. For example, when I first came to this country in the early 1960's, there were very few Chinese here at that time. In general, there was a stereotype that all Chinese were uneducated laborers, or maybe owned a restaurant or a laundromat. It was very common for people to greet them with, "Hey, Charlie, where's your laundromat?" Even though this was insulting, eventually more and more Chinese came to this country and got a good education, even becoming highly educated. After some years it was no longer, "Hey, Charlie," but it became, "Sir, are you a doctor?" or, "Are you a professor?" Throughout Chinese history, there must have been many talented people who could have been doctors, professors, or engineers. But how many actually developed? Nearly none. The potential was always there, but it did not get developed or perfected. Yet in the last 40 years, so many Chinese have been "perfected" in this country that the high potential is able to be realized. With our spiritual potential it is the same. We all have genuine potential, but it needs to be developed. We need the spiritual perfecting in the local churches. May the Lord have mercy.

- Titus Chu

Worth Reading

On the Bible:



How We Got The Bible
Neil Lightfoot

Simple and concise, Lightfoot provides ample evidence for the integrity of God's Word, as passed down to us. (As with other volumes, earlier used editions are nearly as valuable.)

What about all those supposedly "lost" books? This book provides a little more depth than Lightfoot's book, but likewise affirms the integrity of the text we call the Bible as being what God intended for us.



The Books and the Parchments
F.F. Bruce

On Prophecy:



The New Temple and the Second Coming
Grant Jeffries

Did you know they have found holy anointing ointment buried by priests during the siege of Jerusalem, and that the Sanhedrin has been recently reinstated? Or that satellites may now be in the hunt for the lost ark of testimony? Just how close are they to rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem?

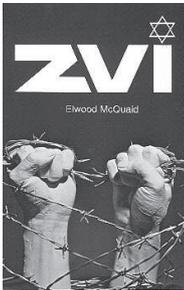
Biographies for Young People:

How far might God take a young man who consecrates his life to Him? Perhaps even to introduce an entire people to Jesus who have never heard of Him before!

There are many parallels to Hudson Taylor's biography.



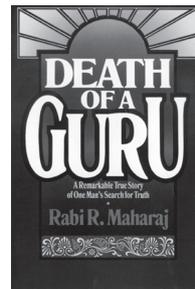
Bruchko
Bruce Olson



Zvi
Elwood McQuaid

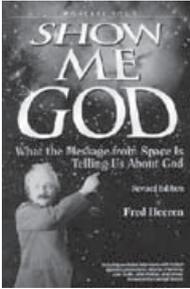
Surviving the horrors of the Warsaw Ghetto and Hitler's Germany, Zvi joins the fight for a restored Jewish homeland, where he eventually finds salvation in Y'shua (Jesus).

Rabi is considered someone to be worshipped, until he discovers One who is greater. Like other biographies here, this book grants insight into another culture as well as displaying the power of God to reach all mankind.



Death of a Guru
Rabi Maharaj

Apologetics & Science:

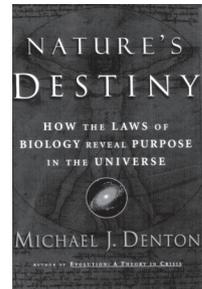


Show Me God
Fred Heeren

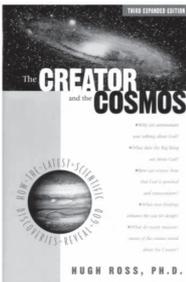
The build-up to seeing the ripples left from the moment the universe became transparent is... “like looking at the fingerprints of God.”

This book contains many interviews with noted scientists such as Stephen Hawking.

Denton does for biology what Heeren does for cosmology in a book that details mounting scientific evidence for a universe designed for our existence. Similar in some ways to Walter ReMine’s *The Biotic Message* in its scientific challenge to mindless evolution in favor of Paley.



Nature's Destiny
Michael Denton



The Creator and the Cosmos
Hugh Ross

How many ways has the universe been fine-tuned for our existence? ...That many?

The most difficult read of these three, Denton's book ***Nature's Destiny*** challenges the view that science cannot detect what we already intuitively know—that is, that our existence has a purpose.

Here is how he prefaces the conclusion to his book:

The Long Chain of Coincidence

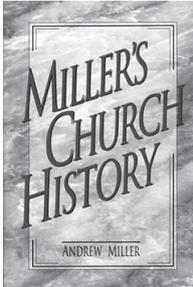
In which it is concluded that after four centuries of spectacular increases in scientific knowledge there is still no direct evidence for the existence of any sort of life other than the carbon-based form with which we are familiar on earth. Moreover, *evidence which suggests that the laws of nature are specifically adapted for life as it exists on earth is continually increasing as scientific knowledge grows.* The main constituents of life such as water and the carbon atom, and environmental conditions such as sunlight and the hydrosphere of the earth, give every appearance of being ideally and uniquely fit for their biological roles.

Although the proposition that the cosmos is a uniquely prefabricated whole with life as it exists on earth as its end and purpose cannot be proven, it is easy to refute. Demonstrate the existence of any one example of life superior to our own or even of an individual constituent, such as water, which is less than ideally tailored for its biological role, and the whole teleological scheme [that the purpose of the universe is human life] collapses. It is concluded that the anthropocentric [man-centered] presumption has not only stood the test of four centuries of scientific advance, but it *increasingly* makes more sense of the cosmos as a whole than does any other competitor theory.

(Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny*, Free Press, 367, explanations and emphases added)

Also suggested for those who like this:
Denton's earlier book: ***Evolution: A Theory in Crisis***

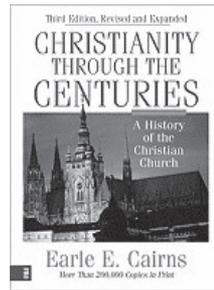
Christian History:



Miller's Church History
Andrew Miller

Originally written over 100 years ago, this history remains inspiring and insightful. Its value lies in following the thread of God's testimony through the ages.

A balanced "standard" Christian history up through modern times. (Many illustrated "handbooks" of church history fall within this category.)



Christianity Throughout the Centuries
Earle Cairns



The Spreading Flame
F.F. Bruce

A helpful account of the first centuries after Pentecost unto the gospel's spread to England. F.F. Bruce was one of the greatest Christian scholars of the twentieth century, and was of Plymouth Brethren heritage.