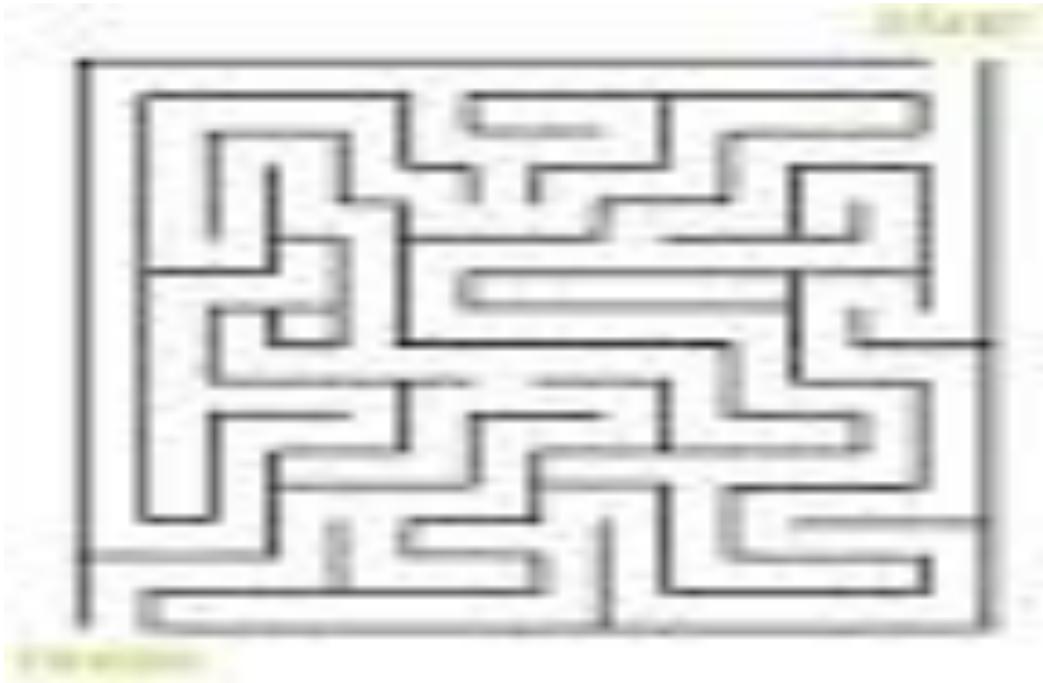


# Negotiating

the Maze:

**A situational analysis**



**By**

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# Author's Preface

Most who hear the word maze probably think of a puzzle. Another word for maze is labyrinth. Both represent a complex and confusing set of pathways with only one right way through. The Bible tells us there is One Way, the Straight Path. I see that living for me has been very much like negotiating through a maze. As a young man I thought I had life figured out. In my first career as a Marine officer I experience the dangers of combat, but it was in the aftermath of combat as a civilian in my mid 40s that my life took a sharp turn I never could have anticipated that opened me up to dangers of a different kind. As a result I had no other option than to seriously turn my life over to God knowing I had gotten seriously lost while journeying through this maze we call living. For the first time I looked closely at my personal religious belief system. My discovery? Real Christianity was quite different than what I had learned inside organized Christianity. So many believers think their way pleases God. The truth is not that simple. Religion can be the most awful kind of deception. Why aren't more believers happy? Why so much confusion inside the church? Why so much disagreement over church doctrine? Why so much variation in acceptable behavior? What is the true biblical standard? Why so much national dysfunction in a so called Christian nation? Why can't we get proven liars out of politics? Do you ever ask such questions? It is important to stay biblically centered. Beliefs and opinions of others can pull off course. Care more about what God believes, than about what those around you believe. Things can appear quite normal, but a careful analysis of scripture will show you this world has spun out of control under the weight of sin. What do I do when I see the path most are taking is not leading where I want to go? My spiritual eyes and ears must be fully open to lead the transformed life God has made it possible for me to lead. Am I overcoming or being overcome? 151,000 people check out (leave earth) everyday. If I go today serious what are the consequences for my family? The Bible says "*examine myself to see if I be in the faith?*" (**II Corinthians 13:5**) My core beliefs are critical to where I will end up. All beliefs are not morally equal in spite of government edicts to the contrary. Periodic reexamination will show me where I am drifting off course. Society teaches contrary to what God considers righteous living. It is dangerous to stay simple or naïve. **Proverbs 12:15** and **14:12** tell me: "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...*" Also "*There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end of thereof are the ways of death.*" These two verses speak of a Normalcy bias that we all have that keeps us in the dark until we wake up to its effects. Is the blindness of others still in this darkness a problem for me? Living out a biblical perspective is not as easy as I thought early on. I must use the supernatural and natural tools available to help me in this life journey. I share this personal analysis with the reader to bless you in your life journey.

Dave Winecoff

# 1

## An Overview

At the age of 75 (2014) the world I grew up in has long since disappeared from public view. It is now just a shadow in a rapidly expanding alternative reality (the expanding world of the lost). I was born prior to the start of WWII. Many Americans back then may not have been strong believers in Christ, but most Americans I grew up around seemed to have a respect for biblical values that is now clearly lacking in small towns to downtown Washington D.C.

Intolerance of biblical truth and increasing legal tolerance of everything else is the new norm almost everywhere in America. We who still believe in the old paths are under increasing restraint from multiple directions; including government which seems to be working hard to turn Christians into a minority.

As increasing numbers of Americans turn their backs on true biblical Christianity to conform with a growing vocal minority. Their personal choices clearly betray them. In fashion are ugly tattoos openly displayed, unhealthy piercings, deviant musical choices, radical in your face behavioral patterns, offensive movies, unnatural sexual preferences, proudly displayed, coarse manners and probably even darker secrets in their hearts! All in growing display inside the church world.

Clearly this is an alien nation I now live in. I am now the foreigner and alien. Can you identify? It seems to me there is no going back to better times. Our culture is in a downward spiral which appears irreversible to me. And, increasing numbers seem to be enjoying this plunge into darkness.

Many wonderful people disagree with this government sanctioned, unbiblical direction in which society is headed. Some are still working hard politically and socially to try to turn things around. More are in a quandary not knowing what to do. All the spiritually blind are impervious. Can our nation survive this increasingly

strange culture? The hard left are at now at the helm of our ship of state and have turned sharply left.

What could not even be imagined by the few luminaries back in my high school days, during the 1950s, is now a growing reality: television, space travel, the internet, satellite phones; accepted pagan lifestyles, etc could not have been predicted by my high school luminaries.

This new norm has hopelessly divided our nation. It has greatly weakening us as a people. What America's outside enemies couldn't accomplish we have done to ourselves in one generation. How was this possible? Everything that has happened to this point to bring in this new national direction, which isn't rational; could it be intentionally, orchestrated by some hidden power?

While revival may still be possible theoretically, and the hope of many in the organized church; it is no longer probable in my view. I hate that this is so. I used to pray and work for revival. I served on a city council and ran for state government hoping to make a difference. I have worked inside the church system hoping to see positive change. This is no longer my bent or passion. I have come to the settled conclusion that the LORD will now have to rescue those who truly love and trust Him from this increasingly wicked society.

Truthfully from my observations, few seem to see the world as I do. Most fall silent and register disbelief in their eyes when I try to discuss such things. Why do so many seem more comfortable with the way things are going than with the way they ought to be? I have pondered these things. I have come to one settled conclusion.

### **there is a looking glass**

There is a looking glass, available to every believer that needs to be looked through to see what is happening. Most believers I personally know aren't looking

through this particular looking glass. I am not talking about just the lost here. Most believers don't see what is coming towards us like a freight train either. This looking glass I speak of is the lens of the prophetic scriptures found in one fourth of the Bible. It is the only way to correctly interpret the daily news headlines to see what might be up next on God's calendar of events.

A primary passion for me is the study of prophecy. I believe it to be future history. As with past history few really seem to understand the value of studying history to determine what went wrong and how to survive in the coming future history. Truly evil people do understand the importance of this study, and are busy rewriting history to keep us in the dark as to what happened in the past and is coming in the future. That is why our school children are so ignorant of early American history. We have had our spiritual heritage stolen from us who aren't researchers.

God wants his family to know what is coming, so he has told us in the Bible. God tells us only a remnant in each generation will get it, know the truth. The below verse describes the majority who never change their stripes. The Bible tells us why in Matthew 7:14 and in John 3:3 and other verses.

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;*

*Who can know it?"*

***Jeremiah 17:9***

One of the things I do in my retirement years is to drive a school bus. It helps to keep me mentally and physically active; and aware of what is happening with our children. It also helps to offset inflation. It shows me how to pray for my local community: the family houses and churches I drive by. I am a substitute driver, so drive most of the routes in our local school system. Daily I have students from kindergarten through high school on the different buses I drive whom I pray for quietly.

Picture a small enclosed mobile play ground with 40-65 among whom are a few hyperactive kids, except it's moving. I traveled at 20-65 mph with scheduled stops

on many different routes during the school year. This gives you a mental picture of what it is like to drive a school bus. Hard to keep some of those kids in their seats. I observe a lot of student behavior some of which I have to correct. I over hear a lot of their conversations. On an average school day I drive 3-5 hours.

Some of today's students are quite different from what I remember growing up. Thank God I do meet and see wonderful students. Quite frankly more of today's young people seem in a hurry to get to hell. It didn't seem that way when I was their age, or when raising my own four children. I don't detect a fear of God in many these days, as was more true in my youth.

### **what is a believer to do**

In light of this brief overview what am I a believer to do? What changes should I make? How can I keep things sane close in around me? How do I keep the growing societal insanity from encroaching on my personal sphere of influence? The Bible tells me to subdue and overcome until he comes. Is this still possible? God says it is. But how is it done? And how am I doing?

Hang in there with me through this book. I will share what I have learned since I was jolted awake by a midlife crisis, into a spiritual understanding that took me outside my carefully constructed box; and helps me today to keep peaceful and joyous in the midst of the growing insanity all around me. I took back control of my life after it had been lost. The key I found was a correct understanding of what is really happening on this planet, we call home, in these last days; and who we are in Christ Jesus.

# 2

## *Imagining a new life*

Personal Imagination takes many on a wild ride through life. Mine has at times! *Imagine* is an interesting word. When this word is tracked through the Bible it doesn't seem to be a good individual quality to have. It is a favorite word in education and scientific circles. Certainly creativity is a good thing. But the new age thinkers with their utopian dreams of how to change the world for the better are leading people down a dead end trail. The writers and actors who inhabit Disneyland and Hollywood, often creating realities that are not real. These alternative realities are often a misuse of their creative gifts to entertain many who are not wisely spending their money. The many who flock to hear and see their imaginary stories acted out on television and in the movies can't seem to get enough such *imagining*. Many learn through such examples to kick back and let their own *imaginings* run wild. Because the devil is in control of Hollywood we do get some clues as to what the devil thinks is happening, and where he is attempting to take us as a people. So often science fiction does become a reality: space travel, etc.

Day dreaming of course is quite normal to temporarily escape from a dreary moment, but when it becomes a life pursuit it becomes a dangerous distraction.

Professional counselors use this word with clients whose focus is not useful, even destructive, to motivate them to imagine a new life without some problem in their life. How does one help a miserable friend in an unhappy circumstance that has them feeling trapped? I suggest use of imagination is not the answer for such problems.

What about public school teachers use of this word? I expect many love to use this word around their students. Isn't the use of one's imagination a good thing? Not according to the Bible use of this word. God does not like this word.

Let's explore this word's use in the Bible. We find it 36 times in fifteen books of the Bible (four times in the N.T.). First use is in **Genesis 6:5**

*"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

We see here that using this facility of the mind tends to get man in trouble with God. I won't take you through all thirty six uses, but I encourage you to study it out on your own.

## **oneness of mind and heart**

In the time of the Tower of Babel, as is the case today, we see that people are heading toward oneness of mind and heart. And that this oneness is taking them away from God. There is a definite programming of people going on through our educational systems, media outlets, and staged political discourses. Much of the church has fallen in line with the secular brain washing that goes on.

There is a new word, *singularity* which is one of the latest buzz words being used to capture imaginations in scientific and educational circles. It is the combining of scientific discoveries with the human body.

Look what God said about this word imagination in **Genesis 11:6**

*"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."*

When people group together to accomplish more, though it can be for a useful and practical purpose in the beginning, it almost always seems to turn out bad in the end for most people. According to God they have left him out of the equation. This is certainly the case in our generation. That seems to be a pattern

way back in **Genesis**. In the next book **Deuteronomy** the use of this facility doesn't get any better but worse.

**29:19** *"And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:"*

And then in the next couple of verses we see that man's stubbornness kindles the anger of the LORD. Using one's imagination does not turn out well for mankind.

In the next book: **I Chronicles** we see God giving advice concerning this matter with Solomon, considered the wisest man to ever live.

**28:9** *"And thou, Soloman my son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he shall cast thee off for ever."*

We see later in this book that Solomon prays and asks God to help the people keep what is good in their imaginations. We see here that one's imagination can become a substitute for a relationship and dependence on God.

Skipping over two uses of this word in the **book of Job** which is instructive I will next highlight the use of this word in the **book of Psalms**. Here God asks a question.

**2:1** *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"*

A very good question! God goes on to tell us what this vain thing is. Such vanity is rampant today. Scary! Further in Psalms God makes a prophetic statement about what will happen to those who imagine a vain thing.

**10:2** *"The wicked in his pride doeth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."*

God goes on in **Psalm 21:11**

*“For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.”*

He then tells us the outcome of their wickedness.

My question is: Do I ever get caught up by such leadership or am I steady in believing what God has to say about a matter? God shows us very clearly how most use their imagination. It turns out badly for them. Are there any vain things I am imagining?

I see in **Luke 1:51** what the LORD has done for me when I stand against those who use their imagination wickedly. He has already fought and won the battle for me because I believe and trust in Him.

In **II Corinthians 10:5** he gives me wisdom and a powerful tool in the last verse which uses this word. It is a key to victory in this life for my main battlefield is in my own mind.

*“Casting down imaginings and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”*

The enemy of my soul works hard to build his strongholds in my mind, in my thinking (wicked imaginings). Paul gave me his thoughts on how to overcome in

**Philippians 3:13**, *“Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,”*

Great advice considering what Paul achieved in often very adverse circumstances.

**Romans 12:2**, *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

To walk in victory in the face of Satan’s mental attacks, Paul, in verse 1 tells me I need God’s help. But to get it I must surrender my bodies and mind to God. This is a daily surrender.

There is much to learn from God in the Bible. When I learn it I am able to walk in victory and push back against Satan and his demons successfully. For almost fourteen years of my life after I got wacked in my mid forties I was stalled, looking back; imagining that things could return to what I had considered normal. It didn't happen and eventually God showed me clearly it wasn't going to happen and I moved on.

Strategic insight is very important in fighting my tactical battles in my own neighborhood. To think strategically is to see the world from God's point of view, not man's. I find his point of view in his combat manual, the Bible. It took me way too long to come to the conclusion that God was in what had happened to me and wanted me to move on.

Let me now look more closely at how to fight back from a strategic point of view.

# 3

## *thinking strategically*

Many will say they love the LORD. When you observe some of their behavior they seem bound up in their own passions, problems and personal conflicts as I was for too many years. Am I similarly distracted now in God's eyes? Clearly my choices are not always handled in a righteous manner when I periodically review past actions.

Scripture assures me I "*sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" (**Ephesians 2:6**) My spirit (the part of me in tune with God) since I am born again from above, knows how to act strategically through my soul to keep me when I am not caught up in the affairs of everyday life. How am I caught up right now?

Satan, the enemy of my soul, had a long time to program me before I came into the saving knowledge and has many around me who are too distracted to move forward in Christ. Are any of their distractions a snare for me? Are the personal fears, unbelief, or deceptions of others hindering me? Yes, it happens! When it does I need to repent, forgive and move on.

### **normalcy bias**

Why is this so? Why don't most see the bind they are in from a spiritual point of view? One cause mentioned in this book's preface, experts call *normalcy bias*. Most are totally unaware of this very normal tendency in us all that affects us in our perceptions when out of the normal things occur with increasing regularity. They don't see how they fit into the grand strategy of what is going on in the world beyond their four walls, or how they are affected. Normalcy bias is very

real. This tendency in us to think that no matter what happens, things will eventually get back to what we consider normal.

There are other more understood reasons why people are bound up. Most simply seem to live as programmed by the world's institutions not having any real understanding of God's commands and ways. Few operate from a biblical world view. Many go through the day caught up in what the world tells them to think. The world's idea of truth is opposed to biblical truth. This makes most righteous in their own eyes.

*"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the LORD pondereth the hearts."*

### ***Proverbs 21:2***

What is strategy? Should I be interested in this topic? Most have only a vague notion of the definition or why it is important to us all. Few consider how it applies in their own personal life and situation! They trust that others with more authority are looking out for them strategically. Most of us are not near the top of any organizational pyramids: socially, politically, militarily, religiously, or educationally. So why would those of us near the bottom of the leadership structure need to think strategically? Most people don't think of themselves as leaders. Isn't it just leaders near the top who have the responsibility to think strategically? We look to them for guidance never suspecting that Satan has direct or indirect control of all the organizations of the world: all of them, through unrighteous leadership. No exceptions! (Matthew 4:8-9)

### **the word of God tells us**

Why do we know this to be true? The Word of God tells us it's true. We learned about wicked imaginations and vain thoughts in the last chapter. Those who really studied this word imagination out got an eye full of whys as a child of the most high God, all of us should think like the kings and priests that God says his children are. It is the responsibility of kings and priests to think strategically in order to better care for those entrusted to them by God.

Satan, who hates us, thinks strategically where we are concerned. He has us figured out. He will use our human nature to take us where we don't want to go. If we are only thinking tactically and never take the strategic view into consideration we will always be inside the maze and never figure the way through.

Most of us don't think strategically (from God's point of view) to ensure that our personal goals are met in our work place or in politics, etc. We just think we need will power and the knowledge of what is expected of us. But to better understand and support our supervisors where they have a right view we should learn to think strategically in their arena too. God will bless those who do.

This word strategy is not part of the everyday vocabulary of most. But we grow more quickly by making new words a part of our everyday vocabulary.

In the present order of things only admirals, generals, presidents, governors, captains of industry and maybe heads of families think strategically. All who make decisions at the top, to ensure that the organization they are responsible for will do well in the natural competition that goes on between families, businesses, governments and nations have a strategic plan. They must think strategically to ensure their organization's survival and prosperity. So why are so many human organizations in trouble. It is because those at the top have a different strategic goal than the one they tell us they are following. To better understand just think one world government instead of a strong America and you will be able to understand why things are happening they way they are.

Why do the majority of us who are at or near the bottom in terms of worldly power have to think strategically? This is a very important question for all personally to keep in mind.

### **a short definition**

Here is my short definition of what I think this word strategy is getting at. I would define strategy this way: *an overall grand plan of action put into effect to carry out a strategic objective.*

I would point out here that this word strategy can't be found in my Bible. (KJV) There are a lot of synonyms used in place of this word such as plan, administration, arrangement, blue print, design, system, etc.; some of which are found in the bible.

A key biblical word I have found God using to refer to the enemy's strategy is the word *craft*. He refers to those who oppose him as *crafty*.

Here are a few verses that get at why it is so important that I understand strategy.

**Psalm 83:3** *"They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones."*

**Daniel 8:25** *"And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall also destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand."*

**Mark 14:1** *"After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft and put him to death."*

## **the enemy has a plan**

I see from just these three verses above that the enemy of my soul has a strategic plan in effect against me and my loved ones because we love the LORD. This is a great reason to understand strategy. Our God has a winning strategy he has put into effect against my enemy that is found in his Word. But I must be in agreement with him for it to help me. (**John 10:10**)

Is there a supernatural plan that God has set into motion to overcome the plan of the enemy? Yes! **The gospel!** Our Heavenly Father set this plan into action to save us through his Son, Jesus Christ, coming to earth to take our punishment for our sins on the cross so we would not have to receive this punishment we all deserve in this life and the next. We are all guilty of sin. But we have to accept this free gift, what Jesus did through our surrender and continuing obedience. Satan's

basic plan is to get us individually to be ashamed of the gospel so we won't share it openly or fully believe it.

## **a most powerful declaration**

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

### ***Romans 1:16***

Often when I get up in the mornings I need to strategically remind myself before beginning my day of the great sacrifice God made on my behalf, and remind Satan to whom I and my family belong. That we are not in his kingdom! That we have been translated into God's wonderful kingdom through God's Grand Strategy! He carried it out at the cross two thousand years ago where he put Satan to open shame. Saying the above verse every morning out loud when I get up puts God's angels on alert, and Satan's fallen angels into confusion about what they had planned for my family today. I like the exhortation to be found further on into Romans.

*“So that we may boldly say the LORD is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

### ***Romans 13:6***

When Satan comes to accuse me I must know strategically what has happened to set me free from Satan's Kingdom, or he will through craft bring me back into bondage through fear, sin and unbelief. It is what I choose to believe moment by moment that is key to victory in Christ, for I have found Satan to be a very clever adversary.

I must keep training and practicing to think like the king (strategically) that I am for that is what we all are as believers in Jesus Christ.

***Revelation 1:6*** *“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”*

***1 Peter 2:9** "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: "*

My wife and I sometimes listen to an on line radio show. It airs Monday through Friday called **Anakpto Forum radio**. Steve Coerper is the host. Recently he was talking about pardon. He related an interesting history. It seems the State of Colorado in the 1800s pardoned someone accused of a capital offense. He didn't think he should have been pardoned by the jury and he went all the way up to the Supreme Court where they ruled that if the accused didn't accept the pardon than the sentence was to be carried out. The final result? The State hung him by the neck until dead.

Steve was making the point that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us, but if we choose not to accept his atoning work at the cross, than we will have to be punished for all eternity because of our decision even though God wanted it otherwise.

That is how important it is for me to think strategically. To see things the way God sees them. Life's battle is more clearly understood when you can look down on it from above the battlefield; strategically. But how do you fight when you find yourself on the ground seemingly in the middle of things?

# 4

## fighting tactically

Within a nation an army's strategic plan is broken down into tactical steps at the individual and unit levels. A lot of time is spent teaching and training the different tactics at various levels of command to be able to carry out the overall strategy of war. Like with earthly nations the forces of heaven and of hell are each part of two different spiritual armies that affect all who dwell on the earth.

All armies are trained to employ tactics against their enemy. This word *tactic* is not found in my Bible either. It does discuss tactics using different words however. Wikipedia defines tactics this way:

the science and art of organizing a **military** force, and the techniques for using weapons or **military** units...

I must keep in mind that I am part of an army, the army of God and never need to feel like the Lone Ranger. If I am feeling like the Lone Ranger it is probably not time for me to make any tactical moves as God employs His army in pairs.

Scriptures tells me I am one of the Lord's soldiers in different places. It tells me to war a good warfare in **I Timothy 1:18**.

**Jeremiah** writes in **51:20** *"Thou art my battle ax and weapons of war: for with thee I will break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms...."*

Some commonly used synonyms for tactics are: scheme, plan, maneuver, method, move, approach, devise, trick, plan, dodge, ruse, contrivance, campaign, direction. Look at two biblical synonyms : approach and devise.

A few biblical uses of these two tactical words are to be found in the following verses:

**Micah 2:1** *“Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.”*

I personally find it hard to comprehend why people would think and do what Micah assures us the wicked are thinking, practicing and doing. Surely there is a wicked world beyond our door that is carefully hidden from the righteous. I must not be deceived or naive about this. I must accept this wisdom from God at face value or I will be overcome.

**Deut. 20:3** *“And shall say unto them, 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,”*

Now in this verse we see that Israel had a different situation than the average American Christian seems to have today. A huge difference between warfare in the Old and New Testaments was that neither Christ or the indwelling Holy Spirit had come to earth yet.

What Israel had to do in the face of a physical enemy we have to do in the face of our enemies, spiritually, not necessarily physically to prevail today. When you or I use the spiritual power given by God in the New Testament we are less likely to have to face the enemy in the physical realm. Is this my increasing experience as I grow wiser in Christ? Yes! This is what the Bible is telling me and what I have experienced. I have found the more I look to God the more things just work out for me in a natural way.

**II Samuel 21:5** *“And they answered the king, that man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we might be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,”*

Now what is this verse talking about? The setting is in the time of King David who is dealing with the bad leadership of his predecessor, King Saul. Certainly I am

seeing similar national leadership today as practiced by King Saul. It is affecting those around me. One has to be brain dead to believe the main stream media is telling us the real story in their news coverage.

I must learn and practice how to deal with what goes on tactically according to how the Bible instructs me, so I can withstand in this evil day. My national, regional and local leaders mostly have no understanding spiritually. I deduct this from their decisions and actions by observing carefully. They are putting our nation in terrible national peril. If I don't act wisely, I will be consumed when the ax falls.

What do I mean? Our leadership is dealing treacherously with Israel for one example. God says strategically in **Genesis 12:3**:

*"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."*

If I don't know how to separate myself and my family from this wicked national policy of treating Israel treacherously my family will perish with the wicked. If I don't take action when God says to move or pray intelligently, things will go badly for me and my family when God moves against this nation strategically.

**Psalm 10:2**, *"The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor; let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."*

Most high level politicians and many leaders in the church talk a good game when it comes to helping the poor. To separate myself from the wicked who run our nation I must do what I can do personally to help those I see who are needy as I see their need personally. He promises to deliver those who help the poor.

**21:11** *"For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform."*

Unlike in King David's day when natural strength was quite important for survival, in our day spiritual power is the primary key. Of all the Kings, David was the most successful not because of his physical strength but because of his spiritual favor.

God has given me the spiritual power I need to prevail in my local circumstances where I feel weak and vulnerable.

**Proverbs 1:31** *“Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”*

We see here in this verse that the wicked devices they intend to use against me God will use against them. Do I really believe this? Such trust is everything to God.

**Isaiah 32:7** *“The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.”*

These evil people can't harm me if I look to and rely on God as my Savior, Lord and Protector and follow his commands. This is fact! God says this in his word. He is not a man that he should lie. When I look to God he delivers me. But I must listen to Him and do what He says.

**Jer 11:19**, *“But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.”*

It often looks and feels like I am a lamb being led to the slaughter. Unfortunately it is so for many now. After the rapture it will be that way for all but the 144,000 who are sealed by God. We pre-rapture believers are promised deliverance and can rely on our biblical promises.

**18:11** *“Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”*

### ***The Bible clearly tells of judgment***

Now this verse terrifies me. That God himself would come against those who say they are his if they are not obedient and righteous in Christ.

**Lamentations 2:17** *"The LORD hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries."*

If I turn my back on God, he will turn his back on me and will laugh when calamity comes upon me. God is not to be trifled with. This nation is in deep trouble.

**Ezekiel 11:2** *"Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:"*

The Bible clearly tells me that evil congregates and resides in the cities. Certainly when judgment falls on this nation which God must allow, the cities will fare worse. Many who are in deception will have one last chance to be saved if they cry out in repentance and forgiveness for God is merciful.

**Daniel 11:24-25** *"He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; yes, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time."*

This verse speaks about the coming anti-christ who I believe is already here on earth.

**II Peter 1:16** *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."*

One thing about these above tactical verses! First they are dreamed up. Then they are practiced before being put into effect against one's enemies. It is bad enough to have evil people plotting against me. It is far worse ,if God because of my actions and personal decisions, comes against me. Scripture clearly shows that God expects obedience from those who call themselves by His Name. He promises to fight for me if I am in His Will and will do so, but will fight against me if I am not.

# 5

## *Taking back ownership*

### ***Governments: often Satan's chief instrument***

The Bible quite clearly describes Satan as a liar and a thief. Looking at history we see more bad governments than good ones. Unfortunately history reveals that governments have always been the chief way Satan ends up lying to us and stealing from us. This earth according to Genesis was given to Adam by the Creator. Satan then came and stole the title deed from him through a lie. We are now, I believe, at the end of the 6,000 years of his possession. It is custom that slaves be released after six years (1,000 years is as a day). So the time is at hand when Satan will be forced to give us our freedom by Jesus Christ himself.

At the website, Torah Calendar.com, those who maintain it believe we entered the beginning of year seven of the biblical calendar on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. If they are correct we will soon witness a catastrophic change described in the Bible. It has got to be close to the Return of the King of Kings (**Revelation 19:11**) to take back full control of this earth.

A thief will lie to get his way. Satan has been lying to mankind through ungodly world authority and has tried to bring in a one world government to overthrow God's plan through Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the Ottoman Empire, Spain, England, Germany, and now the USA.

Before I came into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and began looking to God as the Lord of my life I was in bondage and deception. I was in his kingdom of lies, deceit and bondage. I loved my mom and dad. They were good parents. Early on I thought I was on the right path. That things would be OK! I found out sadly I was

a bit skewed in my thinking. While I thought I was free, I hadn't really surrendered my life to Jesus, except through a faulty sacramental system. So I was living in the lie Satan had created. Most never have their eyes fully opened to the truth that we are all sinners and need God's individual deliverance, help and protection. He is not into the clergy-laity system operating throughout the Christian world. Certainly we do find decent, saved people inside this system; that is not the argument.

I was raised going to church on Sundays, and learned enough in the religious system of my upbringing that eventually when things came to a head I knew where to turn for help and did so. When I got to the end of my trying to control my life, I cried out to God and he showed himself strong in my behalf.

Sadly, most never make such a personal decision, but stay trapped in Satan's system. Though I thought I was staying righteous within my church's sacramental approach, it wasn't until half my life was over that God's truth became alive for me. Our belief systems are critical. Mine was keeping me in deception though I didn't know it.

## The word believe

I find the word, *believe*, 286 times in my Bible. Its first use is **Genesis 15:6**. It says this about Abram:

*"And he believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness."*

At the time in my life where I should have been the most productive I had something very precious stolen from me, that sent me into personal crisis for years. As a nation we have had our basic belief, Christianity, stolen from us. It happened through our government one step at a time. The change to no fault divorce very definitely led up to my personal crisis.

Outsiders looking into our culture can more clearly see that we are no longer a Christian nation, than can those who have been raised up inside the church system. Most of us have been shamed into silence and are no longer bold in sharing our faith as were prior generations of Americans. This present

governmental administration, led by a president who claimed he was a Christian to get elected, clearly demonstrates the hollowness of our collective belief system. And we elected him again a second time. We have very little credibility left as a people who say they believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. Putin of Russia recently said of us. *"We are a Godless nation."* Judging by the depraved condition of our society he spoke the truth. We are supposed to be the head and it is fact that we are more the tail.

### **there is good news**

But there is good news. Even though we are no longer the majority opinion in side America's governmental system we can through spiritual power given us by God live our lives as over comers in Christ. According to the Bible when the thief is identified he then must return seven times what has been stolen. The Bible clearly identifies the thief as Satan. But one must first know something is theirs before dominion can be taken back. I must take personal action to make something that was stolen mine and most never do.

*"Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house."*

#### ***Proverbs 6:30-31***

My wife, Karen, and I recently saw the movie: Twelve Years a Slave. For me it was difficult to watch. While largely true about a certain slice of early American history, its focus, I found its timing disturbing. It didn't deal with how do we get beyond such a history. Only in Jesus Christ provides us with the answer to overcoming racial division and our nation has rejected that solution. Did this factually true movie help us in bring people together? No, it did not though it was mostly Christians who fought for the end of slavery which this movie neglected to make clear.

This movie unfortunately further divided us as a people. It gave blacks ammunition to justify where they are at in our present age, though everything

one needs is in place for all of us to rise above our individual circumstances as compared with other nations. This movie, in my view, stiffen the back bone of whites who saw it. They will say I was not alive at that time and can't be held responsible for what some of my race did back then when slavery was almost universally practiced around the entire world in every nation, not just here in America. And It still is practiced today in many Islamic nations who are much worse than America was at that time.

### **neither logic or reason will carry the day**

No amount of applied logic or reasoning in my view will carry us into a better life. The primary problem each of us is faced with is spiritual.

We all live in an increasingly popular hedonistic culture. Until most individuals experience some kind of trauma and cry out to God for help they will never come to a point of seeing there is a better belief system to live by; faith in Jesus Christ. So where is the average Christian at? The opportunity to effect change is by disciplining one new believer at a time. We can't change people until they want to change themselves. How do we do this? By being an example and by becoming stronger believers through our own repentance and forgiveness!

How can I attract someone else to the way until they see something different in me they want? None of us are righteous outside of Christ. We must believe this. What we believe about God is absolutely essential in this life as well as in the next.

Of the 286 uses of the word, believe (belief, believers, etc.) in scripture we find it used 41 times in the Old Testament. All other uses are in the New Testament which is God's present covenant with me.

Do I want to remain living under the ruler of a thief and liar? The one who rules this present world system? Or will I continually choose Christ and become fully translated into His Kingdom of Light and out of the Kingdom of Darkness?

My Heavenly Father chose while the world was steeped in sin to send Christ to save me. I don't have to become good to be acceptable to God. I just begin by choosing Christ as Savior and Lord.

## **Can this fallen world be saved**

Can I save this fallen nation and world? No! This is not our purpose in life. While the elite are working toward this goal, in fact it is an impossible task for any but God himself. We are too far gone as a nation and as a world. It will take the return of Jesus Christ to set this world aright once again. So I must learn how to function and survive in this fallen world as a pilgrim until he returns to rescue me.

*"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."*

***John 10:10***

How do I get God's attention? Only by a full surrender! Until I give up my life, turn it over to Him completely I will never become an overcomer. Key to life is getting on the right side of God. He is the only one who can defeat Satan, my mortal enemy. He is the only one who can save me. He has already done everything necessary at the cross, for us to survive in this enemy controlled world. What good does what Christ has done for me do, until I fully submit to Him? Submission is the key in the below verse, then I must resist and then Satan flees from me.

*"Submit yourselves therefore to God, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

***James 4:7***

## ***only with God's help***

I can never take back ownership of my life without God's help. Truly there are only two owners in this world. Satan or God! We are in deception if we think we are in control of our lives without the help of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Until we are born again into the household of God we are in the household of Satan.

**Mark 3:27** speaks of the bondage of being under Satan's control. Only one stronger than he can bind him, and I am not that man unless I am acting in the power of Jesus and His Word.

I want to look at this word *believe, belief, believed, faith, believers* more closely. It is a key action word I must understand fully to be an overcomer. There is no way I can do justice to the many uses of this word in the New Testament although it would be a great study. I must keep in mind that the age of the gentiles is almost over. We gentiles have very little time remaining in this present dispensation. Current events, in the light of biblical prophecy, tells me this is so. The mission of the church is almost over: it is to disciple those the Father has drawn to Christ.

I think it is amazing that the first non Jewish believer was a Roman soldier named Cornelius, a gentile.

*"And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou has believed so be it done unto the. And his servant was healed in that hour."*

### **Matthew 8:13**

This verse is the first place I find this vital word used in the New Testament. Here Christ speaks of this man having great faith. He never ascribes great faith to any of his Jewish apostles. But only to two people: one man, one woman; both gentiles.

The second place I find this word used, Jesus does a miracle by giving sight to blind men in **Matthew 9:28-30**. *"Believe ye that I am able to do this? ... Yea Lord... Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened..."*

Jesus here clearly demonstrated the power of our own belief when correctly centered on Him.

In our nation we have taken belief in Christ out of virtually all our public systems. Anyone who is politically correct concerning this awful policy is foolish at best thought conforming with many. A Christian who is a public servant these days, it seems, must be very wise and careful to discern when to share his faith and when

not to. Remember there are forces out to destroy me when I am bold in Christ, so during such times I must be in his will. In **Matthew 18:6** again we see this important word used in a warning:

*But who so shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for them that a millstone were hanged about their neck, and that he was drowned in the depth of the sea."*

Jesus in the very next sentence follows this warning with a terrible woe for those who ignore his warning. So where does this put all who go along with our present abortion laws; at terrible risk.

Another time I see this word used it talks about believing John the Baptist. I don't find this word used one time in the book of Revelation which is quite interesting. Fascinating! The church is conspicuously absent from Chapters 6-18 of the Book of Revelation. These passages are the blue print for what will go on during the terrible tribulation following the rapture. At this time the focus is back on the law and the prophets (i.e., Israel). The final use of this critical word, faith or belief, is in **the Book of Jude**.

*"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the LORD, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not."*

With the use of this word, believe/ believe not, etc., God makes a very clear distinction throughout the Bible concerning those who reap judgment and those who reap reward. He hammers this message home in this very last verse using this word. I see here the final outcome of all those who believe not.

Simply put Jesus secured the victory for me at the cross. I take back ownership of what has been stolen or lost by believing that He will do what He has promised in scripture to do. My part is simple, to believe what He has told me in His Written Word confirmed by the Holy Spirit that he sent to live in me until I am caught up to be with Him for all eternity. Until that day I live in enemy controlled or influenced territory and everything is not as it seems on the surface. I have been offered the supernatural skills to endure and overcome. But I must use them.

Blessed be His Mighty Name and His Holy Word. What a comfort they are in these troubling times.

# 6

## overcoming my enemies

I can see through the light of the gospel that most are confused about who is really behind the problems that trouble all of us from time to time. God is very real. So is Satan very real. One will never understand how our nation became so divided, confused and troubled without a clear understanding of biblical eschatology and America's end time role or lack of one. Eschatology is the study of the last days. Few seem interested in such a study.

### **our best days ahead?**

That we are in a national decline is indisputable. It can't be intelligently denied. Yet liberals and many confessing Christians dispute that we are not in such a decline. They believe that our best days lie ahead of us. As Rush is fond of saying liberalism is a mental disease and tragically it has infected mainstream Christianity.

Hopeless division explains the stagnation and political chaos so evident in our politics and national decisions. Blame is cast in many directions to deflect any direct responsibility. Talk to five different Americans and each will place the blame for what plagues us somewhere quite different from the other four. None of the five you talk to will likely have a clue to the real source behind our national troubles.

Conservatives and liberals attack members of their own political parties who are not partisan enough while continuing to attack the opposition. Party leaders generally place citizens into three primary groups: liberal, independent and conservative. This simple division is not good in these troubling moral times.

Jesus tells us: *“A house divided cannot stand.”* (**Matthew 12:25, Luke 12:52**) Government officials use to mostly demonize rogue nations, but now we are seeing signs they fear their own citizens who they know won't go along with their increasingly anti-christian programs and preference for the U.N. over our own Constitution. Some hate whites. Others blacks, etc. But the bottom line is this: increasing division. Why? Because increasing numbers of us have directly or indirectly turned our backs on the God of the Christian Bible.

## **being humbled as a nation**

Satan is carefully bringing this once great nation to its knees through a strategy of division. Still most citizens can't see it because they don't know history, the U.S. Constitution or their God. So, since things are waxing worse and worse just as Jesus told Paul would happen (**II Timothy 3:13**), how do I overcome my enemies in such an environment? I must first understand spiritually what is going on.

Among the first settlers to this continent were Puritans (Christians) fleeing from religious tyranny and persecution in Europe. These Godly people formed a covenant with God upon reaching the shore of what they called the wilderness. This covenant is historically referred to in our history books as the Mayflower Compact. This covenant with God and the individuals of their small band of brothers and sisters in the Lord has kept the enemy at bay for a long time. This small band grew into thirteen colonies that revolted against the tyranny of England. Our citizens came together again and made another agreement. It is known as the Declaration of Independence, which is the preamble to the U.S. Constitution. It recognized certain biblical principles from the Bible, but not as clearly our need for God. This need is now being increasingly ignored by the Supreme Court, the Congress and our Executive branches of government, the people's governing representatives. These written documents, the Bible, gun carrying citizens and believer's prayers are the only real thing standing against the same tyranny here in America, their forefathers fled from centuries ago in Europe.

## **our covenant being trampled under**

Clearly our long standing covenant with God is now being trampled underground by those now running our nation. They are bringing in a godless and new world order that ignores the commands of God. Increasing numbers of Americans want us to throw in our lot with the godless peoples of the world represented by other religions and the United Nations Assembly. I clearly see this and my Bible tells me this would happen.

On January 22, 2014 we passed a mile marker: the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Decision, where we made abortion the law of the land. It has been the right of every mother for the last 40 years to kill her unborn child. This is a very clear violation of our covenant with God to protect the innocent and defend life. Earlier our representatives removed the Bible and prayer from our public schools and governing institutions.

Things have gone downhill rapidly since these awful legal decisions. Yet even now most in my generation are not alarmed at our downward slide and look to corrupt leadership to turn things around.

Forty years is the time of probation for an individual and for a nation. We have clearly gone past this line. This means judgment time is here and we see increasing signs of its arrival.

Since Israel again became a nation in 1947 we have been dealing with God's covenant people in a treacherous way to our great shame. Scripture is very clear that this is a huge mistake and we see what has happened in other nations as they turned against the people of God. (Genesis 12:1-3 and Daniel 11:39, etc.)

We have been experiencing chastisements for awhile as God tried to get our attention. But now the time of chastisement is over. National judgment has begun. Our nation has begun to suffer national decline like all other nations that turned their back on the Jews who were clear world powers. (Spain, England, etc.) In the area of public morality here in America anything seems to now be OK now, except to be a Christian or a Jew.

We have clearly crossed the line. We have made God our enemy. Most believers in this nation are double minded and jump back and forth across the line God has drawn to one side or the other. At some point double mindedness will cease when God says enough. This moment will come suddenly. Then the line can no longer be crossed. Those caught on the wrong side of the line will find themselves abandoned by God.

Who do I see as my enemy? That is a critical question when our government is systematically being turned against people like me. Government with its vast powers is clearly becoming a problem for those whose desire is to live righteous in Christ Jesus.

But those who hate Christians and Christianity are clearly not my particular problem if I stand firm in Jesus. If I am standing with God they become God's problem. This is only true if I believe in the supernatural and in God's promises of personal protection.

My flesh wants to rise up and do something to help turn things around. But my spiritual side sees that the way things are, though indirectly our fault through our fallen natures and our capacity to sin; God has made it his problem because of our supernatural enemy, Satan and his fallen angels.

Now for one who sees things only in the natural realm which is the natural tendency of us all, they aren't training themselves to see things from the vantage point of the supernatural realm. It is in that realm where victory or defeat for me and my family is determined. Will I go down with this nation? Or will I stand with God against the majority and give him the opportunity to maintain and eventually rescue me?

Some of us are as smart as a whip. As strong as a lion! And politically well positioned and very popular! But these qualities can't save them when collective judgment falls. If I don't choose daily to see correctly spiritually, I will be defeated. This is a sure thing.

I have touched on these things in other books of mine. The importance of whose side to be on cannot be stressed enough. If I care about where the majority is

headed and go with the flow I will be wrong and will be overcome. The majority are on the broad path toward hell.

Jesus Christ is not a popular national or international figure these days. The public use of His Name will get me in trouble unless God is calling me to take a public stand. (**Luke 21:15**) Jesus told me clearly on the night before he went to the cross in **John 14** that this would be the case.

It takes courage to stand alone, but this is the only correct stand to take. Most are choosing wrong. God has given me the spiritual power to prevail and to overcome, to make the enemy systems serve me. (**Psalm 23**)

Jesus gave a very sobering warning in **Mark 8:38**: *“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”*

This end to chapter eight of Mark is very sobering! Without Christ I can't overcome...

With him and in him I will overcome. That is his promise to me because I believe in him. He will overcome my enemies.

# 7

## making the system serve me

All around us it seems that those in charge are turning their backs on the God of the Bible. The middle class, nominally Christian (????), is becoming more and more burdened under the weight of increasing taxation and regulation. The number of Americans who can find full time work has shrunk to an all time high as our jobs are sent overseas by the multinational corporations with government approval. Now one third of our adults who want to work can't find full time work.

### **what is really going on**

The main stream press tells us that unemployment is low and our economy is expanding. This is contrary to all hard facts. They no longer investigate and report but just seem to read us the governmental press releases. We see adults in our own extended families struggling in ways that should not be. Are the systems we have depended upon in times past now in danger of collapsing? If so what is going to happen to us? Can God still make an increasingly crippled system serve his people?

What is going on? Government rolls are growing fatter while governmental inefficiency and ineffectiveness is at an all time high judging by the scandals, suicides and student dropout rates. Food prices, energy rates, and gas prices are rising. The structures our largest cities depend upon are breaking down. How is an average working class American supposed to survive if things don't get better soon? Without the help of God he won't survive.

**Daniel 12:3** tells me: *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”*

How can this verse be true in light of what is going on around us? It is critical that I discipline myself to focus on what God tells me in his Word, and not judge my chances based on what is going on outside my front door.

### **it is time to be looking to our God**

Just as when Israel was in the wilderness after fleeing Egypt I must look to my God. The Jews who failed to learn this lesson in the wilderness perished in spite of the fact that God brought them out of Egypt with his strong right arm and had a plan for them to live and prosper.

When it is very dark that is when a candle shines most brightly. But it must be lit and stay lit. No matter how few the candles those that are lit will be seen by many and glorify God. We are God’s candles.

A growing number of Americans are capitulating to governmental pressure to turn away from the Bible and conform to increasingly restrictive and hard to live with rules. This was the case with Joseph and Daniel in their day. Just as with Daniel and his three friends I must resolve to remain righteous in spite of pressure from the system to change and conform. Those who stand with God give Him the chance to step in on their behalf. The many who watch will notice what happens to those of us who are brave in Christ.

I love what God says in **Matthew 10:32**:

*“Whosoever will confess me before men, him also will I confess before my father which is in heaven.”*

While I certainly can’t stand alone against a more powerful and anti-christ system, God can require that system to favor me if I am resolved to conform to Christ. I can count on God’s help. When the going gets rough, difficult and impossible to

endure, his word assures me he has a way through for me. How can I know this to be true?

*By faith!* When I have no access to his written word there is the still small voice of God through a rhema word that I will be able to depend on.

I see in the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis that Joseph was sent ahead of his brothers, years before famine came to the land to prepare to help his brothers. I can be sure this is also the case in our generation. There will be those in the government who will look out for me in spite of what the enemy of our souls, Satan wants to do to me. (Genesis 37-45)

The Bible has a lot to say about famine, and God's help in those lean times for those who are his. I see this word used ninety times in nineteen books of the Bible.

Here are two promises I can stand on when famine comes:

***Psalm 33:19*** *"To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."*

***Psalm 37:19*** *"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."*

Those who are paying attention can see from all the 'crop destroying storm' news around the world, and here in our own nation, many more will face famine in the coming months that have never faced it before.

In some nations, such as Somalia, a Muslim controlled nation, there is and has been severe famine in the land with millions starving and dying. We see in the news that many states in America are facing hardship now due to water shortages. Recent news headlines have reported California and Texas towns about to run out of water for their citizens. California is just one state facing very hard times. Californians should be paying very close attention to God and his instructions right now instead of trusting what government is telling them. But few there seem to be, that are spiritually aware.

America has exported a lot of food to other nations in the past. Many of our farmers are growing corn not for food now, but for fuel which adds to the drought that probably half our states are in right now. Here in Washington State our growers who are oriented towards cash profits are checking into growing marijuana legally. Neither children nor animals can eat this new cash crop.

It would be easy to get into fear for a responsible parent with children on a limited budget seeing all this happening. This is a time for our faith to draw strength from the promises of God such as the two above promises of God in the Psalms. Will I get fearful because of what I see and hear or will I focus on what God says concerning his provision for those he loves.

I will train myself to look to my God. That will be my primary source, not the government or my own natural abilities. I will practice now while things seem normal to make holy declarations (**Job 22:28**) concerning provision and safety in the Mighty Name of God. And I will give glory to God until he chooses to deliver me and my family from troubles. (**Psalm 50:15**)

# 8

## *my hope is not in this world*

Sometimes it takes a hard knock or a series of hard knocks to wake a person up to real truth. This is what it took to wake me up for sure after my hopes came crashing down in my mid-forties with a devastating personal blow. Many never recover from great disappointment. They can't seem to move beyond what traumatized them. My major, corrective setback, didn't happen on any of my three times in Vietnam. It came in the aftermath of my combat experiences toward the end of my military service years. It was clearly allowed by my God for my own good. But it held me up for years after it happened because of spiritual confusion in my own thinking.

I see now it was my own stubbornness of heart. For fourteen years following that tragic event I tried to imagine a different outcome. I couldn't for a long time get beyond what had gone wrong. My focus was wrong. It didn't matter that I thought it was right. Only in hindsight can I now see how stubbornly I clung to erroneous beliefs upon which my hopes had been based.

These days I run across many who are just like I was, fixated on their past. Rehashing and refiguring, reanalyzing: trying to make sense out of what happened, is very common for those who have been greatly disappointed. Before my rude awakening came I was a disciplined person. I set goals and accomplished them. I was on a successful career track and building up steam toward a future of increasing responsibility and privilege in my chosen profession. I had a wonderful family life. I thought I loved God. I was in church on Sundays.

I had head knowledge of sin, heaven, hell and such; and I and my family were in church on Sundays with me. But in hindsight I now see God was not much in my

thinking beyond such times when I offered up a brief morning prayer, grace before meals and an occasional more serious request of God.

The great personal tragedy of my life that was a total surprise and knocked me flat was when my pursuit of life was interrupted by my wife's request to divorce. I was in the stage of a career shift, having retired from the Marine Corps. During that time her support was especially important. But, she had other plans that didn't include me. When the divorce came our four children were eleven years old up to nineteen years of age. One in college and one just entering! The five of us were caught by surprise. None of us saw it coming.

I never thought such a thing could happen to me. I loved married life. Some get over such a loss quickly. I didn't. I was heavily invested in my family: coaching, Sunday School, supporting our children's activities, starting out a new life as a civilian. We had four active and involved children needing support.

Looking back now from a vantage point of twenty nine years later, I clearly see God used this event to clarify the focus of our moral direction. I was involved with a lot of form and ceremony where God was concerned; not really authentic Christian living. My relationship with God in hindsight was shallow.

This kick in the stomach, allowed by God, set me firmly on the narrow path. I seriously began calling out to God and searching out how such a thing could happen since I thought I was serving Him.

The changes I made in my personal life style in time turned my life around. It took me fourteen years to let go of my failed marriage, begin to move on. Much has happened spiritually in my life since that awful period that would never have happened if that event had not happened.

I have gone on overseas missions trips. I have prayed for people. I have seen God work in the lives of others in powerful ways. I have shared my testimony on numerous occasions. I have seen God touch souls. Recently we had an on fire granddaughter ask to come and stayed three days with us just to share about the things of God. I now have a spiritual discernment missing in my earlier life that I could not have rectified on my own.

I could not have grown spiritually the way I have. My former wife was not going in the same direction spiritually that I had told God I was willing to go in. Thirteen years ago after sixteen years of aloneness I remarried. My new wife and I just learned from a visiting family member that my former wife is now getting more serious about God This has been our prayer. I have prayed a lot into her life over the years. It is my hope she will find a real relationship with God as I did.

Before that hurtful event my hope was focused more on circumstances than on anything heavenly. I was a religious person raised in a religious home. I thought of myself as a Christian and a decent person. I expect many saw me the same way. But my relationship with God was shallow and not growing. It was mostly ritual and ceremony. I was not spiritually awake.

The blessed hope talked about in the Bible was truly not a hope I knew anything about back then. My focus was very earthy. I loved God as I knew to do, and prayed rote prayers learned in my youth. God was not central in my life seven days a week as He is now. This personal crisis caused me to cry out to God in a way I never had before or since.

His promises in the Bible for the first time really began to come true in my life as he kept me secure and safe through the very lean years that followed as I tried to hang on, then recapture, a lost past.

My hope was up and down through the lean years that followed, sometimes like a Yo Yo.

Over time through the daily reading of his word and real prayers that came from my heart, my focus turned from myself and circumstances to God and what he had planned for my life. My faith in God came alive and increased as I was slowly transformed from a religious Christian into one with a saving relationship. Now I trust and look to Him in a way that was never possible in the past.

At the time of this personal tragedy I really knew nothing about the importance of faith. What it entailed! How to practice faith to make it stronger! He put an increasing fire in me to read the Word of God on a daily basis. It drew me closer to God and really saved my life. It changed my focus. It healed my heart. It

allowed me over time to forgive those who had hurt me, and has allowed me to forgive myself for what I see as the greatest personal failure of my life.

My children are all grown. They are each successful in their own way. While they too are challenged at times they all know who to look to for real relief. They are all in God's hands now. I look to him to transform them all in His own timing as He has me. I see how my struggles handicapped some of them as did the struggles of my own parents influenced and my two brothers in both positively and negative ways.

My children are all married. Two have provided me with grandchildren. God has given me back a wonderful family life with a fulfilling second marriage. This has added five more married children into my life. My present situation is so much richer than I could have hoped for or deserve.

Best of all, I now have a wife who is truly compatible with me spiritually. She is a Proverbs 31 help mate!

If you have been disappointed by someone you loved dearly I can honestly say that there is a plan of God for your life beyond any present personal disappointments you may now be experiencing. God is wonderful. He will heal your heart when you look more fully at Jesus Christ and let Him replace your plan with His and have the faith to trust that He will work things out over time.

When trust is crushed it is a very difficult thing to go on. But go on we all must. Real faith and trust are key to living a loving, happy life.

I should not be surprised at how things have turned out for me since that awful time long ago. But I am! Scripture tells me God has a wonderful plan for me. Now I can say it's all true.