

Unto the Shedding of Blood

By Catacomb Resident 2021
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Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

*“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;
FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”*

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (Hebrews 12:1-8 NASB 1977)]

Introduction: Why Anonymity?

It doesn't matter who I am.

The name is bogus and symbolic. I'm not hiding from anyone, but nothing about the purpose of this book requires knowing about me. The message is everything.

My motives aren't that hard to figure out: I have no interest in leading or being led. Nobody else is doing what I'm doing, and I'm unable to remain silent. My faith is outside the Christian mainstream, but I do follow Christ. I take the position that Christ was a Hebrew man, teaching a Hebrew God to people who had very nearly abandoned their Hebrew heritage. God chose the ancient Hebrew culture as the best setting to reveal Himself, so if we don't understand that culture, we don't understand Him. The packaging is part of the message. And it doesn't require any significant scholarship to realize that Judaism is Pharisaism, and that Pharisaism bore only the most superficial resemblance to the ancient Hebrew Covenant of Moses. Jesus panned the "traditions of the elders" (AKA, the Talmud) as a blasphemous rejection of divine revelation. So, we must ignore whatever Jews claim about Moses and the Messiah and study for ourselves what Jesus was teaching. That's what I mean by following Christ.

I've done my best to absorb the ancient Hebrew way of looking at things and, from where Westerners stand today, it's Ancient Near Eastern mysticism. Following Christ yields Christian Mysticism. That says almost nothing about what I believe, and only tells you how I get there. Christian Mysticism means holding an utter certainty that we have had a personal encounter with a transcendent being who comes to live inside of us. It requires withdrawing from significant trust in human intellect or capabilities, and trusting our convictions, because the divine Presence speaks to us in our convictions first. We spend our whole lives after that encounter striving to expose those convictions to our minds. And we are by no means bound by human declarations of orthodoxy and practice, because no two of us will receive the divine calling in quite the same way.

There's a lot more to say about where that takes us, but that will come in later chapters. There's no reason we can't fellowship based entirely on a shared sense of calling and conviction. There's no need to lock each other into our personal sense of what God demands from us. Thus, everything shared in this book is just a declaration of my own convictions. If you can tolerate me, I'll tolerate you. Nobody is building a church here, just helping each other face a time of tribulation. From what I've seen on the Net, there are just a few others out there who share some elements of my faith. We are widely spaced geographically, so face-to-face fellowship is nearly impossible.

If you are looking for a faith community to join, try the [Radix Fidem covenant community](#). The only requirement is that you tolerate the leadership. Make yourself known by joining in the conversations.

This is a bad time to organize in a way that a human government can recognize. There's no point in organizing so as to offer any kind of leverage, whether from us or toward us. God's wrath is falling on governments all over the world, but the perspective of this book is from the USA. I'm utterly certain we are entering a time of tribulation and persecution. If you don't see how a concerted effort to follow Christ the way I do can get you into trouble, then I can only question your obedience to Him. The whole point of the title of this book is to remind folks that resisting sin will cost you. We aren't exactly in good favor with the mainstream churches either, so we have no institutional protection at all.

The purpose of this book is to share ways we can face this challenge. We are living in a virtual Catacomb, forced to go underground to minimize the effects of growing hostility to our kind of holiness. It's not that mainstream believers are wrong, but that we cannot join them for any number of reasons arising from our individual sense of calling and mission. If what I have to share can help just a few of you out there, it's more than worth the effort. I encourage you to remain anonymous, too, especially if you plan to make comments online in support of Christian faith, or even just to email this author. A critical element in living through persecution is having a witnessing persona in a world that doesn't know Christ. The Bible is filled with examples of separating between those inside and those outside the covenant relationship. We cannot treat enemies as family.

It's all about the message, not who we are. In the final analysis, only God really knows who we are in the first place.

Chapter 1: Target Audience

Are you standing in the target zone?

As previously noted, there is no intent here to lead anyone. All I'm doing is blabbering to scratch my own itch. Writing this stuff down helps me to clarify my obedience to the Lord. The one thing I want most for my readers is that they become strong enough in their own faith to walk alone if necessary, and are better able to discern when and where fellowship is appropriate. Thus, the old saw: Don't follow me, just walk alongside. No one can do it for you, but if you want it bad enough, maybe what I show you will do you some good.

I am utterly convinced that this is what our immediate future demands. We have already been in tribulation, and it's about to turn apocalyptic. That is, it's going to get worse and will call for extraordinary faith and effort.

So, what kind of background stands behind these anonymous rants? A better question is: What kind of people will be comfortable with what will show up in this book? Keep in mind that any list I might offer would have to be flexible. Legalism is not welcome in my world, but genuine holiness is. I'll give you five issues to consider, so you'll know whether this book is for you.

You are committed to following Christ. In the Bible, that kind of commitment is called “faith,” and in the Hebrew culture, faith is rooted in the heart. Hebrew people had a totally different idea about the heart than is common among Westerners. I’ll explain in more detail later, but I’ll note for now that your heart has its own form of intelligence, and it’s all about faith, not feelings or sentiment.

You haven’t been blessed much by mainstream American churchianity. It’s pretty easy to see that the whole model of how the West does church is not at all like the first generation of churches. Where are the miracles? Again, we’ll have more about that later. We all have our own spiritual and psychological bruises and things that we would emphasize, but it’s not necessary to become bogged down by the specifics. I’ve given a hint of where I’ll go with this by suggesting that we need to be more Hebraic in our orientation.

You don’t buy into Dispensationalism. There’s no need for hostility toward Jews or the modern State of Israel, but the only way they could have any favor from God is through Jesus Christ. The biblical Covenant of Moses ended at the Cross. The written record of that covenant still points to a lot of important truth, but the covenant itself was vacated. So even if they wanted to claim Moses out of mere tradition, it means ditching the entire past two millennia of Talmudic scholarship, returning to the ancient mystical Hebrew outlook, and observing Moses as Jesus taught it. I don’t know of anyone who imagines that Israel today would even consider that.

You hold yourself accountable to what Scripture teaches. We’ll get into this in almost every chapter that follows, but standard systematic theology is not biblical because the ancient Hebrew people would have rejected the entire Western intellectual approach. Here’s a hint: That Greek philosopher named Aristotle? He spent time with ancient Hebrew scholars and rejected their approach. He was pagan. Why in God’s name would we then adopt his intellectual assumptions when analyzing the Bible? Nobody who wrote any of the books of the Bible was oriented that way; the Hebrew language itself does not work that way. When Alexander the Great marched into that area in about 323 BC, he evangelized everyone with his Hellenism and Greek culture. A short time later, it became quite the fashion for rabbis to embrace Hellenized reasoning (Aristotle) and thus was born legalism, which led to Judaism. Jesus would have snickered at the notion of “propositional truth.”

You are convinced that resisting government is pointless, but that resisting sin may be hard for secular authorities to accept. We try to avoid provoking secular authorities, but sometimes it’s impossible to prevent. The US is under God’s wrath, and it should be clear He intends to crush it. The final death throes will see a rising persecution of faith and holiness. That’s how it always happens with human governments that ignore God’s Law.

That’s enough for now. If you can tolerate those ideas, you’ll likely be comfortable with what shows up in this book. It’s not a matter of agreeing with everything presented here, but of understanding what’s behind it. From there, you should have no trouble bouncing things off your own convictions and deciding what might work for you.

The idea is not for me to define your thinking, but to help you strengthen your commitment.

Chapter 2: Working Model

I’m not your model; I’m just one of many working models.

I have no doubt that the Lord has a great many other servants who are working on the same divine project. Some of them are you folks reading this. But I am one working model that you can examine as just one implementation.

Get used to the idea of being anonymous online for fellowship. This is a peculiar time of

tribulation, the kind of thing that doesn't happen very often. No, it's not the big one, the End Times. But this is a radically different situation that calls for the development of a radically new understanding of what it means to serve Christ. The culture and society in which we live is going to change dramatically. There's nothing we can do to help people stuck mainstream Christian religion, hanging onto the old ways or trading for something even more empty (like "entrepreneurial churches" with CEO pastors and their religious entertainment franchises). They won't see a reason to leave that until God calls to them, and they can hear it. This book assumes you've already been called. We must back out of those churches because they belong to the dying civilization. We have to disengage everything about that society, including its churches, wherever possible so that we can stand outside the whole mess and see it for what it is.

It's a little bit like it was with Abraham. He left everything he knew. He didn't have a covenant community to fellowship with; he stood pretty much alone before the Lord. He did have a covenant, but no significant fellowship. There was some spiritual kinship with Melchizedek, but the whole mystery about that priestly king of Salem represents just why anonymity online is so important. You see, Melchizedek wasn't a proper name, but a title. It was like a nickname. Abraham recognized him as a fellow servant of *El* (the name by which Abraham knew God) on some terms, and shared the blessings of God with him, but they didn't associate that much.

Each of us is like another Abraham. We each have a calling to stand alone before the Lord as we bring with us one background that will be exchanged for another, totally different one, something more primitive and less civilized. We'll be living isolated in virtual tents. We are homeless in that sense. Most of us can't actually leave society, but we can surely withdraw and regard ourselves aliens wandering in a foreign land. And we can surely keep a loose grip on the trappings of this world. It's not our home.

The thing with anonymity is that it forces us to focus on Christ, and whether we recognize Him in each other. We need to get used to dealing with each other anonymously online. When you read this book, it's like Abraham meeting Melchizedek, and none of us needs to know anything at all about each other except the flavor and strength of our faith. That alone is enough grounds for sharing the blessings of God.

This way, we can preserve the true reason for fellowship in the first place, while making it very difficult for those without faith, who feel threatened by genuine holiness, to interfere with our fellowship. Meanwhile, we can focus on that business of holiness and not get entangled in things that don't matter. Don't tell me who you are; show me your faith. That's what I'm doing here with this book. I can assure you that we will still recognize each other in Heaven.

I've been called to serve as a working model of faith against a rising persecution. If you don't see it coming already, I can't show it to you. But if you sense it coming at us, then let's talk about what it takes to keep our witness alive – anonymously.

A true stand of faith makes you a target for persecution.

Chapter 3: Virtual Equals

Jesus spoke of Himself as a shepherd.

Very few people alive today have the same image in mind that Jesus did when it comes to serving His Father. The Western myth of the Great Man is a deeply perverted counterpart for that. At the same time, we know that the Western social mythology also ends up in having the mass of people herded like cattle, while each member of the herd is fed some huge lie about how they could one day become a Great Man, too. All of it is quite contrary to the biblical image of how things work. Cattle are driven; sheep are led by voice. Western society has always had an elite group steering things for the purpose of oppressing everyone else, and that includes

keeping the lies alive.

On top of that, Scripture says nothing about the difference between the real world and the virtual world. There was no such thing in biblical times, but they are different. Granted, if you absorb the meaning of Scripture in your heart, and then you allow your convictions to dominate over your intellect, you are likely to know instinctively how things online should be to keep peace with God.

The fundamental nature of the Internet is that each connected device is equal to all others. Every device is just a numerical address. Once again, Western rulers have long sought to pervert this. They would rather nobody have an actual computer, and certainly not with an operating system the user can actually control. They prefer mobile devices that owners never actually *own*. The way mobile devices are promoted as “all you need,” and how they cripple the user’s participation, is just another manifestation of the elitist rulers and their oppressive ways. Still, the protocols by which machines communicate online still start with the assumption of total equality. Those who understand how networking works can make even a restricted mobile device take its place as an equal member.

It is not the bogus social equality of Western culture, another lie of the elite. Western mythology of equality and fairness and high social trust are all lies, utterly foreign to Scripture. No, the fundamental equality of devices on the Internet is based on something else entirely. It’s a different world.

If we had a genuine biblical shepherd-n-sheep covenant community of faith in the real world, that would be one thing. We’ll talk more about that later, but the point here is that people serving the Lord in the real world must have godly shepherds. The blessings of divine authority work that way. In the flesh, I could not offer you a share of the blessings God has given me unless you enter the domain God has granted me and submit to my moral authority. It’s ancient Hebrew feudalism, and all of Creation is wired that way.

But the virtual world is not like that; it cannot be like that. Every machine has the capacity to be a server to other machines requesting data as peers. So, any fellowship that is rooted in virtual space must work in a similar fashion. You cannot honestly have a church sprout online. It won’t work right. You can bring your real-world church to the virtual world, but the relationships and functioning has to be established in the real world first.

This book began as a blog in virtual space; it’s not a church and it never will be. All of you are my equals in that virtual sense of the term. You all have the same capacity; the protocols assume that. It’s not that we can’t build a sense of fellowship and community, but that it must presume a collegiality. I’m not your teacher. I’m just sharing data that I have. I presume you have some to share with me. On the blog where this book was born, it was an open request that readers serve up that data whenever anything they had was pertinent. This book includes the author’s email address so you can do that.

What may not be obvious is that God will bless things that way. Online or not, the world remains His domain always, and He is the ultimate high Lord of all other domains. So, while we cannot have a church online or in a book, He will bless us together as virtual equals sharing what we can contribute to a fellowship that is focused on the message, not the people.

We will need this kinship by any means as the persecution starts to wear on us. Nobody here is going to save anyone else, but we can encourage each other and pool our data resources. It would be even better if some of you had an anonymous blog, maybe like the one that provided the substance of this book. I wouldn’t ask anyone to hand code a simple HTML blog like this one. But either way, we could all create one of those ol’ timey webring, websites that link together as an association sharing information on a subject. In this case, that subject would be the faith we all need to face persecution.

But whether things progress that far or not, know that the nature of what you will find in this book assumes you are an information equal. And if not, you should strive to get that way.

Seek the Lord to develop His calling on your life, because that's a critical part of preparing for tribulation.

Chapter 4: The Eden Path

There are some basic assumptions we need to proceed with this business of facing persecution. First is that we will face it. That is, Jesus flatly warned that if you don't face some resistance to living His teachings, then you aren't living them (John 15:18-25). There's something amiss and you still need to make some changes. There's no need to provoke persecution intentionally; it always comes. Tribulation is the native growing medium for spiritual fruit trees.

Why are we in this world in the first place? Ever since we were kicked out the Garden, there's been that Flaming Sword guarding the entrance. It's not to keep you out, but to change you so you can get back in. The change isn't instantaneous. There's a long overlapping period of time while that Sword does its work, slashing out all the things that don't belong in the Garden. The last thing severed is our mortality, our human existence. And the whole point is that at least some of the folks around you will see the transformation before you die. That's how the Lord shines His glory through us; His glory is the only reason He made us in the first place.

The story of the Fall in the Garden was never taken literally by anyone with a Hebrew background. It's a parable. Recognizing that fact is a part of Christian Mysticism; we take it seriously, but not literally. The whole point is that we are in a mortal state, and we got here because humans instinctively prefer to trust their own capabilities to work out what's good and evil, instead of relying on what God says about it. We are designed with a capability of knowing instinctively what He says about His Creation, but we never listen to that without some effort on God's part to get our attention.

That effort on His part is a divine calling. It's entirely His initiative. We'll never understand how it works because it's beyond our capability. We just have to take His word on it – that's the way it is. That's the first step in restoring us to our design, where we take His word on things instead of trusting our own capabilities. He gave us the ability to trust His word and doing so changes everything.

It's possible to discern some of that change clinically. It's also possible to fake it, in the sense that, what a clinician can discern, can also be manufactured on a clinical level. Only God can do the real thing, restoring us to His original design. It changes our understanding of what's good and evil. In other words, it gives us a different moral orientation. It awakens in us that original function in the Garden of trusting His word on things. And when it starts to really take hold of you, it makes you feel completely alien in this world. You realize that you don't belong here, and when it really has you, you don't really want to be here.

But if that's what He requires of you, then you'll stay around to let people see His work in you. We are in the world, but not of it.

And when you don't belong in this world, people who do belong to it won't be comfortable with you around. They may try to hasten your departure. But most of the time, it's a matter of demanding that you conform to their orientation. Your otherworldly orientation threatens their plans to fix whatever they don't like about this world. We know beyond all doubt that fixing this world won't happen, can't happen. The only "fix" possible is starting down the path to leave it, the path back to Eden. That path threatens everything this world values.

Get this clear in your mind: The only way to live in this world is by His revelation. Everything He

said will work as well as things can work outside of Eden. He promised to watch personally and make sure it works out. But it works out on His terms. And the world that hasn't been touched by His call will refuse His terms. They can't even comprehend His terms. They can grasp some manifestations of it, but they can't grasp the inner nature of things. They can read the written provisions of God's Law, but they can't read between the lines to see His divine moral character.

That's what your heart is for, according to that revelation. They don't have a clue about that. Their souls are restricted to their heads and emotions, while the servant of God lives in his heart.

We need to talk more about that.

Chapter 5: Right Resistance

Resistance to government policy isn't necessarily futile; it misses the point.

The primary reason this book focuses on persecution is that a bunch of powerful people have agreed to destroy everything we know, and us, too. They plan to enslave all of humanity, those they don't kill off first. This will probably work to some degree, but not for very long. Killing is easy, but God won't permit them to actually gain that level of control. The attempt to seize that kind of control will take a while, as will the failure. We are in it for the long haul.

Their conscious reasons for this aren't simply to crush Christian faith. Frankly, most of the organized Christian institutions around the world are on board with a significant part of this plan. Churches balk at some flavors of the plan, but not the idea itself. Churches are just as partisan as any other worldly human institution and that virtually the entire gamut of mainstream churchianity is aligned with one or another flavor of this epic plan is not in doubt. Organized religion is part of this enslavement plan, not a target of it.

So, while we find much in government policy worthy of objection, it's not our reason for objecting that matters to the officials. It is the resistance itself. You shouldn't count on the Devil to attack faith directly. The idea that he does is a false notion; it's part of the mythology of alleged persecution that doesn't actually exist. Real persecution is invariably blind to what Satan really hopes to accomplish. Very, very few forces in this world directly oppose genuine faith because almost no one without faith understands faith.

So, while we know that our Enemy, the Devil, is seeking to silence our witness, virtually no one he uses as troops are aware of it. This is why Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 that our warfare is not against people, but demonic powers working behind human governments. We aren't fighting the government; we are resisting the Devil's temptation to go along with silencing our witness.

Our resistance to sin requires we understand what God demands of us that human governments ignore. Their source of law is a sense of right and wrong cooked up by human reason in a cultural context. Culture arises from people who overcome some collection of difficulties in pursuit of the lusts of fallen souls (1 John 2:16). That they succeed in any measure is how cultures are built; it's a collection of strategies the people used that seemed to work for the purpose. It got them what they wanted; it must be good and sacred in its own right.

The world has yet to see a culture that arises from truly otherworldly pursuits. There are some cultures claiming it, but the resulting human existence looks nothing like God's Laws. The one attempt at building such a culture eventually failed when the very pinnacle of their culture came in the form of the Messiah.

Jews had already hijacked the ancient Hebrew culture and perverted it into a very worldly pursuit of power, property and pride. It's the very opposite of peace with God, so their use of the word *shalom* was a perversion, a symbol of how legalism was born from taking a very mystical and otherworldly text and trying to apply semantic analysis. We are forced to go back and

restore the mystical form of analysis to rediscover what they lost (“rightly dividing” in 2 Timothy 2:15; their “word of truth” at that time was the Old Testament).

Thus, the Harlot Church is riding the Beast of idolatrous human government. This harlot will persecute us, too.

Our weapons are not the weapons they use on us. Our weapons are the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of our testimony, and we do not cling to our lives when faced with death (Revelation 12:11). You’ll notice that nothing in that verse indicates tactics and practical examples. Those are between you and God, based on your calling and mission. Rather, this book is intended to celebrate the meaning of those words in a moral sense.

You get to build your own experience of facing challenges; you’ll build your own culture of victory, but not at all in pursuit of human lusts. We pursue divine glory. It’s the prerequisites for that building process that we can share here. Because God places all of us in unique situations to testify of His glory, what we should study together is the nature of His glory.

Of course, you are going to resist government edicts. Those edicts are aimed at fulfilling the plans of those global elite rulers, along with the lusts for power, property and pride of all the various petty government officials who are tasked with carrying out that broader agenda. It would be quite easy to get bogged down in discussing how this or that policy is evil. Right now, there aren’t any good policies, and precious few that are harmless, so almost the whole agenda is evil. Nobody involved in the process cares at all about what God has already said is the right way to govern.

It does little good to talk about all the flaws of counterfeit government when too many of us wouldn’t recognize the genuine article. We need to spend more time focusing on what God’s Law requires of us as individuals, both in the broad moral orientation and in examples of what that orientation produces in the context.

Please, let’s not have talk about our rights. The whole concept of rights is based on turning reason into a false deity. It assumes the existence of something that God has established separate from Himself, and that you somehow become accountable to that thing instead of Him. It is not some “rule of law.” God’s reign is very personal. Don’t bog things down in discussions of what should be binding on government, because government officials don’t care. Here in the USA in particular, the Constitution is meaningless; it’s just a way of deceiving the little people. Not one promise government has made will be kept in the long run. It’s just a question of timing for the sake of manipulation.

Let’s talk about how God can supply our needs for the sake of the mission, despite human efforts to harm us. Let’s talk about how His Law shows us what He is like, and what He has promised. Let’s talk about how His Son explained such things. You do know that everything Jesus taught was under the Covenant of Moses? Let’s examine together what a covenant is and how it is supposed to work.

And most of all, let’s look at how you and I can adhere to, and receive the blessings of, His Covenant with us. What does it require of us, and what should we expect? The context is that virtually none of us will be blessed with belonging to a genuine covenant community of faith for a long while yet. How do we work with that? This alone is enough to give shape to a Christlike resistance to sin, and to bearing our own crosses.

Our Enemy is not people, but the Devil who uses them.

Chapter 6: Forbidden Fruit

Is Jesus in your heart?

The answer depends on what you believe about your heart. American mythology, shared with much the West, considers the heart a metaphor indicating sentiment. It's the nurture part of you – family influences, social customs, traditions you learned. It's roughly equivalent to your conscience. While regarded as quite a powerful collection of things, it is nonetheless considered amenable to efforts to change the contents. This is assumed without any discussion.

In the Bible, the heart is the seat of *faith* – which is another word for your capacity to make a moral commitment. In this the Hebrew culture agreed with almost the entire range of Ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Faith was considered quite substantial, and typically responded to transcendent powers. Faith is how you get acquainted to your convictions, your personal calling and moral character. Those were presumed written into your soul by God. There wasn't much you could do to change the contents, but you could choose to ignore them. Indeed, it was universally regarded as the difference between someone wise and someone foolish. The wise would seek to know what their commitments demanded of them in every context, while fools tended to respond to lower urges of the flesh.

Hebrew people felt that a major problem was divided loyalties. Jesus was typical in saying that you cannot serve two masters. In terms of psychology, that was more a matter of your flesh interfering with your heart. When the Bible refers to "double-minded" it points to the confusion that comes from a human intellect trying to usurp the rightful sovereignty of the faith and convictions. Your conscious awareness could choose to side with the head or the heart when there was a conflict. In all cases, any conflict between the two meant the head was wrong. The heart was always right, in the sense that it never failed to grasp the true moral nature of things.

The whole of Western Civilization flatly denies that the heart is like that. Indeed, American culture flatly denies that such a thing is possible.

For the ancient Hebrews, the heart had its own "mind" and was the sole source of moral intelligence in the human existence. It was the one part of you that bridged the gap between the fallen world and spiritual realm. They never said much about the spiritual realm because there was no way the flesh could understand such things. The spiritual realm is ineffable. So, we are left with seeking to connect our hearts more strongly to the divine, so that it could in turn inform the mind what was morally required in any given context. The purpose of intellect is to organize and implement those moral imperatives.

The West is founded on Aristotle's notion that there can be no transcendent realm. There is only this world. This makes the human reason the whole of transcendence, and logic becomes god. This was the kind of thing Alexander the Great spread when he conquered the Ancient Near East, including the Hebrew people. This intellectual influence was absorbed by Hebrew rabbis. This sort of thinking is how Jews made the Talmud into a *de facto* deity. They worship their understanding of the Law of Moses and personify it so that Jehovah is just a smart-aleck rabbi. When the New Testament mentions Judaizers, it refers to their efforts to spread their philosophical approach as a means of breaking down Christian teaching, to capture Christians as slaves to Judaism. They succeeded largely, despite apostolic efforts. This is the source of churchian confusion about the spiritual realm and God.

Even though churches use the word of Scripture, they inject a wealth of pagan mythology that reflects the mainstream secular culture. Church-based counseling acts as though the heart is just the conscience and needs adjustment. They try to inject a new value system that reflects the theology of their particular brand, which brand was arrived at by human reason. Western Churchianity is just another kind of Talmudism.

We need to reject Talmudism and restore an ancient Hebrew anthropology, a biblical set of notions about human nature. For them, Jesus in your heart meant that you had a vivid feudal commitment to Him as Lord of your life. Those words meant something different in Hebrew

culture compared to what they mean in most churches. The Hebrew outlook is that the written record of revelation is not God, but a faithful guide to who He is as a Person, manifested in concrete terms of what He said and did. They assumed that you would read it with your conscious awareness resting in your heart, not in your head. Thus, your heart would discern things no one could put into words.

Then your heart in turn would instruct your human mind on how to plan and implement obedience. Your conscious awareness would become the agent that humbles the mind to serve the heart. The heart is a higher faculty. Thus, faith rightly overrules logic in every case. Faith tells you what you must do, and not allow the arrogance of human intellect to presume to rule for all of Creation. When you walk by senses and reason, you are right back where Adam and Eve listened to Satan in the Garden. It is the Forbidden Fruit.

Let's stop eating from the Tree of Judgement.

Chapter 7: Community of Dispersion

I have no way of knowing what God wants from you.

Yes, there is a published record of revelation that does put us on some common ground, but how that book speaks to you is meant to be a call for you individually to come face to face with God. Nobody can fulfill that requirement for you. The whole business of redemption is personal, one-on-one.

God does require us to love each other, and to try building up each other's faith. That does not require us to cooperate in any particular fashion. No mere human can decide for you what "cooperation" means. No one on this earth is commissioned by God to decide that for others. We are required to try cooperating as much as the context and the people permit, but the personal divine calling still reigns supreme. You are not required to swallow your calling to serve for the convenience and planning of others.

Nor are they required to give you a place to exercise your gifts. If you cannot live without that kind of community, then consider what matters most to you and pay the price.

Now, if that subservience to the community is your calling, get to it. God can attach your service to any people He chooses, and the most important thing is that you are utterly certain about what He requires of you – when, where and for how long. But nothing in the divine written revelation we all share demands it. And just as surely as there will always be some who do serve others that way, there will always be some whose calling demands they work mostly alone.

Romans 13 says you have one primary obligation to Creation as a whole, and thus to humanity: You must love with God's love. Beyond that, God says you owe them nothing. Paul suggests in that passage that love does lead us to avoid conflict where possible, but by no means does God demand that we squelch all conflict. We take up our Cross and obey the Lord, and the rest of the world be damned – because it is damned. You see, the love of Christ was both sacrificial and confrontational. Not to change the world, but He acted that way to open the door to leaving this damned and doomed world. He is waiting for some threshold we will never understand, but when it is reached, He'll come back and destroy this world.

You have zero obligation to support the hell-bent agenda of fallen humanity, and there is also nothing you can do to stop it. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is let people run off down into Hell – even more so if your efforts to stop them are guaranteed not to work. God alone knows when and if they can be turned around, and His power alone can do it. On the scale of things, your witness against the race into Hell is very small. God uses it, but don't be surprised when He doesn't. Learn to be cynical about humanity in that way.

Intervention in someone's life is a mission calling, not a presumptive necessity based on the mere fact alone that people are going to Hell. Logic and human talent are not enough to do this job. Don't pervert this into some objective logical demand. Intervention is a divine mission, person by person, and there are plenty of people for whom your own mission is to stay out of the way.

This book isn't likely to offer much to those called to a gregarious community life. They have their calling and a mass of published material on how to face what's coming. There's nothing wrong with that, but for those of us who aren't called to that, we need our own way of doing fellowship. We are a different nation entirely. It requires a lot more space between us, a far looser connection. Our fellowship must be reliable and consistent, so we can come and go and always find it there when we need it. It needs to come with no strings attached that God Himself doesn't put on it.

Given the probabilities of the coming tribulation, mutual anonymity is one of the best ways to proceed with online contacts.

God will always make people like us. It's not to say we are the cream of the crop in any way, but we do have a very distinct place in the divine plan. We are a part of the much bigger divine revelation, and we don't have to understand why. But we do have to grasp the nature of our mission and calling and make the most of it.

We have the same mission as the others, in the sense that we should seek to preserve the legacy of what God has done for us. We are building something, too, and it warrants making the most of it so we can share it with those like us who will come along behind us.

The most important thing we can do for them is let them know this divine calling exists, and that they won't be damned for leaving the man-made restrictive atmosphere.

Chapter 8: More Holiness, Please

The proper response to persecution is the same faithfulness we should have when things are not so rough.

If anything, persecution simply requires we try harder. Persecution adds to the message an urgency that would be missing otherwise. It becomes more urgent because our Enemy has the battle advantage. He has more assets committed to his success. Keep in mind that people are not the enemy (Ephesians 6:12). They are merely the weapons our Enemy uses against us. The people in turn will bring to bear against us their social, political and economic infrastructure. We are in hostile territory, and it's all against us. There is no refuge, no place to hide, unless we are able to focus on the spiritual realm. They can't touch us there, but we must forfeit the fleshly side of our existence.

The primary failure of Church History is the temptation to seize control over the earthly side of our existence. It perverts faith into just one more political campaign, which means Christians must sacrifice the one advantage they have. "A mighty fortress is our God," and with Christ, He removed all earthly political operations. The one and only human political entity He sponsored ended with Cross; the Covenant of Moses died with Jesus. There can be no earthly politics in service to Christ because His Kingdom is in hearts only.

However, you still have your allegiance to the Cross. This allegiance means that, while we are in the flesh, we take action in a fallen human sphere that points to leaving the human sphere. And fallen mankind will always interpret our allegiance to the Cross as a political position. We hold no real loyalty to any entity on this earth, but your human government sees only that it means you aren't loyal to itself. In the natural cycle of things after the Fall, in times when the human

situation waxes more difficult, the secular government raises its demands, and that's when it notices our loyalty is somewhere else.

Our primary testimony is in how we face suffering. Our sense of peace with God, as we are consumed by human agony, is what they will notice. Yes, they will destroy us. Perhaps God will see fit to preserve some of us, but for the most part we should expect to meet our reward sooner than later. You must turn to stone regarding the human anxieties over what happens on the worldly level. Persecution is here; that means your reward is nigh. If you see your own death, or the death of those dear to you, as a tragedy, you'll never understand how God's glory works.

Indeed, the one best hope you have for surviving is having that stronger commitment to your testimony. It's the paradox of the gospel witness: Those who care the least about their lives are the ones who typically survive persecution. But it's not a rule, just a tendency – remember that. You can't drive yourself to a stronger commitment by gaming the statistics.

Still, the kind of commitment that makes our light shine brightest is also what will do more to isolate us on the fleshly level. The Bible refers to God shaking things in His wrath (Isaiah 13:13, for example). His Body is shaken, as well. The image comes from someone shaking a long flowing garment to knock loose dust and crust that may be clinging to it. It's a means of purification.

In the Old Testament, “may God do so to me” was accompanied by shaking the front of one's garment, but it really meant pulling it off and whipping it up and down hard enough to crack like a whip. It's a critical part of understanding the wrath of God against sin. From time to time on this earth, He shatters what humans have built to remind them that they are fallen and that they are not living by His Word. When He starts whipping His robe, it knocks loose people who claim Him but who don't actually belong. They aren't part of His actual adornment. His saints are supposed to beautify Him, woven into His garment itself.

So, we should expect to lose false brothers and sisters. What makes you more likely to be woven into His glory is the kind of tightening of boundaries that marks a more complete commitment. It demands a higher allegiance, where you are ready to die without much thought. “Oh, it's now? Let's do it!” It requires an exceedingly high level of resolve and enthusiasm. It teaches you that life in this world is just a game. You might get a do-over from God, but don't count on it. Just play with skill and abandon and don't worry. It's only a game.

Let's say that to ourselves out loud: “This life is only a game.” Play it to the hilt. In the Kingdom of Christ, death is just a circumstance.

That level of commitment is rare, and that means you will have far fewer friends during tribulation. Lots of people will fall away. And the only people you can trust will be those who are too committed to the Cross to be hindered by the social isolation of holiness. This book is aimed at people who are like that, so the idea of anonymity is no hindrance at all. It protects the strong from distraction and gives the weak a chance to recover.

So, for us, the purpose of suffering and persecution is to drive us more completely into the arms of our Lord. See Philippians 3:8-11, Ephesians 6:11, James 1:2-8, and Romans 5:3-4 – we become more like Christ, so that He enjoys our company more. It's not that you will have no fellowship, but it must first stand on a purer fellowship with the Lord. And in our growing faith, we learn to trust Him that He will provide the fellowship we need, though seldom as much as we want. It's part of the mortification of the flesh to learn how to prosper in a shortage of human friendship. Of course it hurts; that's part of the bigger picture of being more like Christ.

So, we will talk about this path through persecution as a call to greater holiness.

Chapter 9: Persecution Church

They persecuted Christ first.

The primary issue with a book aimed at discussing the gospel message, and the demands of a higher degree of holiness, is that doing so transgresses already recognized boundaries of those who reject the gospel. And those who reject the gospel are in the ascendancy in terms of social and political power. We should expect censorship online, along with intimidation and stalking in the real world.

The choice for anonymity in this book can forestall the physical threat. It also limits the reach on censorship since it becomes challenging to trace it any farther than the author's account at any of the services used. Given the trend of things in the US, the business of publishing the gospel message online often has to do with whether the opposition is aware of it. To our advantage, most of censorship's attention is not against those operating outside the main social media services. But what of the broader terms of persecution to which I keep referring?

"Persecution" is the label we apply to any activity that interferes with our divine calling. Mere social pressure is a given, even in the best of times. It is persecution, albeit rather mild. When the surrounding society becomes more uniformly hostile, to the point they begin making physical threats, then it's what most of the world might recognize as real persecution. If the threat becomes government policy, then it's official persecution.

We have watched over the past few decades as more and more governments have made publicizing the Scripture illegal, particularly passages that condemn popular sins. It may vary with just how public your quotation is, but the principal danger is spreading over the face of the earth. Here in the USA, it has come under increasing social pressure and sometimes commercial sanctions. Now we stand the risk of the government joining in this persecution. For a great many Americans, quoting Scripture can get you fired from your job, socially harassed, stalked by mobs, have your business shut down, and in a few cases, actually jailed.

In the near future, it is virtually guaranteed to become federal government policy to silence the gospel message. Not the whole Bible, of course, just those parts that call into question certain common idolatries. They are only too glad to misuse passages that make good propaganda weapons. It will be technically illegal to hold genuine Christian convictions. Even if you don't press the issue in public policy, your private choices will become progressively socially unacceptable and thus, illegal. That day is upon us.

Do you hope for a harsh backlash, even violence, from those who regard traditional American Christian religion a matter of liberties and rights? People who talk about such things, especially online, will be the early targets of oppression. They have already faced stiff opposition online, being censored and forced to take their chatter to services launched specifically for them (or so they believe). Feel free to join them; this book won't help them much.

The purpose of this book is to address people whose convictions don't run that way. The people who are rising up in aggressive social resistance are not like us. Their religion is nationalism in disguise, draping the US flag over the Cross. For them, this is politics, no matter what propaganda they paint over it. Political resistance cannot perform the gospel mission. Those people will turn on us because we will be forced to condemn their sins, too.

Here's the thing: A higher degree of holiness means completely walking away from the culture war itself, because all sides in that war reject the gospel, though different parts. It's a fight to preserve their choice of sins. No government on this earth will ever promote genuine holiness, whether it be an official government or a simple *ad hoc* one. We must always walk away from such things in order to maximize our peace with God.

What we do here is call for people to rise to that higher level of holiness, regardless of persecution. The paradox of how this works is well known. Persecution is polarizing; it drives away fake believers, but it always seems to call forth people who needed something they could really believe in, something worthy of commitment.

That's the faith we want in our company.

Chapter 10: Spiritual Birth

Let's establish a baseline from which to build personal holiness.

First, without spiritual birth, none of this matters. No human language can explain this rationally; we get hints in the form of parables in the Bible; the term "spiritual birth" is itself a figure of speech. Parables help to indicate ideas we can associate with the ineffable truth of things, but nothing can completely explain it. We must act as if it's true regardless of how it makes no logical sense. Scripture indicates what we should expect in real world terms that come with this ineffable change.

Spiritual birth is the Divine Presence in your soul. It is a miracle entirely on God's initiative. You participate in Eternity; something in you is connected to an existence outside this world, and outside time-space constraints. All of this, while it leaves your conscious awareness locked inside the time-space continuum. This Holy Spirit Presence grants insight, and the power to act on that insight.

The biggest problem we have in discussing the implications is that too many church people bring the wrong instincts to bear on the discussion. You cannot possibly make this thing logical. Human reason is not the pinnacle of our abilities; faith is the highest faculty. Faith should not be subject to reason, because faith makes the most unreasonable demands. Reason must be subjected to faith because reason is part of our fallen fleshly nature. Scripture does not explain things with the aim of giving you enough to analyze, as if you could turn spiritual birth into a logical process. It is by no means a human decision. Rather, Scripture assumes spiritual birth, and it offers just enough to allow the reason to organize and implement obedience only. What revelation demands is possible only after spiritual birth.

It is Scripture that tells us there is nothing at all we can do as humans to gain spiritual birth. Indeed, spiritual birth seems to be the kind of thing that happens outside of time-space limitations, so it's eternal of itself. It either is or isn't already something with your name on it. You don't gain it; you recognize it. There is a lot that goes into that recognition, bringing you to the place where it has meaning. Your faith must be awakened since it is dead when you are born, as was your spirit. But the notion that you can decide it is a flat out lie – without spiritual birth, you aren't even capable of wanting God's Presence in your life (Romans 8:7). All you can do is decide to embrace what comes with it once you realize you have it.

If you can grasp that, then you will be forced to shift your understanding of the New Testament away from common mainstream church teachings. All the Bible quotations and abstractions published and taught in churches that presume spiritual birth is a decision? They become a fat pack of lies. The whole point of seeking "salvation" is a matter of claiming your spiritual birthright. It's not saving your soul, but redeeming your human existence. The reason we gather in church fellowships and raise up an alternate lifestyle of divine grace is to build something that makes the most of what was promised by God to those who walk in His Word. We are making peace with Him, seeking to clean up the mess we all make of our lives through moral and spiritual blindness.

Evangelism is helping people recognize their spiritual heritage, but only if they have one. Obviously, that implies we are obliged act as if there are people who can't do this because they

don't have such a divine heritage. But as a working model, we should rather assume that the people we encounter simply aren't ready yet. That's because we cannot possibly know if anyone does or doesn't have a spiritual inheritance waiting for them to discover; we can know it only for ourselves. And once other people start acting like they have it, we cannot know if it's real, only that we have an obligation to establish a standard of what it means to claim the inheritance and be a part of our family household of faith.

Church membership should be an implementation of being in a family household. It's not about fleshly DNA, but spiritual DNA. There's nothing institutional about this; it's entirely organic. You can't possibly know if someone shares your spiritual DNA, but you can estimate their loyalty to the Lord through their loyalty to the local family household. That's what membership in a church implies. The member is granted full access to the same love and warmth due one's kin, the same resources shared by the family.

This all assumes you understand that the Law of God is not legislation and rules; it's the fundamental nature of reality. It's an implementation of privilege. In that sense, we can say that the Law of God is its own reward. It's not a restriction; it's a set of boundaries that protect you from deprivation. You stay inside the boundaries because that's where the sweetness lies. And it's only made richer and more magnificent when shared with others who are committed to the family identity. It's a chore to maintain those boundaries, but it's worth it. That's why obedience to His Law is called "salvation" – salvaging what's left of your life, making it conform as much as possible to His design.

All of this is fundamentally consistent with Creation. What God created would naturally reflect His personal moral character. Creation itself actively promotes His Law (Romans 8:19). So, we go about our daily lives of claiming our own inheritance as the primary means of demonstrating what God requires of humanity. Living at peace with God /is/ evangelism. It speaks that language of revelation on a higher level than mere human conscious awareness. We transmit the gospel by how we live, and souls waiting to claim their salvation will receive that message with or without words. The whole universe echoes back, confirming our witness.

None of this is reasonable to the mind of flesh, but it makes very good sense in our hearts.

Chapter 11: Graceful Law

Do you realize that the Law of God requires your heart?

Paul wrote in Galatians 3 and 4 that there have always been two covenants. For so long as the Covenant of Moses was still in force, it was just a cover for the Covenant of Abraham. Some few people in Israel managed to see through the written code of Moses to the heart-borne Covenant of Abraham. Moses himself pointed this out in Deuteronomy 30, talking about how the real meaning of the Covenant was supposed to live in the heart. All the fleshly struggle possible would not breathe life into the Word of revelation. Only a commitment from the heart would do that. It had to be in your mouth (symbolizing fleshly obedience) and in your heart (symbolizing commitment).

Under the Covenant of Moses, it was presumed that if you truly committed yourself personally to Jehovah, He would guide you to the truth behind that written code, and you could discover your spiritual birth. The law code was like a beacon beckoning to lost souls with a strong sense of calling. Through the Law, you could become an actual child of God. Reading the narrative today would indicate that there were far more Israelis who didn't than did. Jesus said the path was narrow.

The individual chronological order of things was reversed on the Cross. There was no longer a national covenant of men, but a spiritual covenant of hearts. It was no longer a matter of

working your way through the written law to discover that you belonged. Now you are granted a personal revelation of that inheritance directly to your heart. But then afterward, you are expected to go back and study that written code to find out what comes with that inheritance. The fleshly mind must be conditioned to obey by reflex.

The Covenant of Abraham was the true Law of God. It demands your heart; it presumes spiritual birth. You cannot possibly obey the full Law of God without that birth because the transformation is specifically demanded. It's not in writing, but it's in the person. People who simply embrace the written code are not family. They are like hired servants with no vested inheritance. They can enjoy some limited measure of the blessings of the household, but in the end, that's all they get. There will always be people on this earth who cooperate with God's reign, but do not belong with the family. They cannot comprehend the Covenant of Abraham, much less participate in it.

Today that same covenant is the Covenant of Christ. It's a new name with a new Guarantor, but there was no substantial change in the terms. It is still a heart-borne covenant. There is in Christ a sort of written law code, just as there was matching the Covenant of Abraham. However, our law component is simply abstracted code from previously published law covenants, chiefly Noah and Moses. Indeed, as Gentiles, we are told in Acts 15 that Noah is our law component (the list of commandments is an extract of Noah's Law), while believing Jews still have Moses – that is, Moses as Jesus taught him.

Paul told us in 2 Timothy 2:15 that we are obliged to study the Law Covenants (the Old Testament was their "word of truth"). Instead of wading through that to discover our spiritual birth, we gain the gift of revelation first, and then go back to study the Law to discover what that birthright looks like. And the whole point is not to memorize it, but to discern what applies to us, and how it applies. We are obliged to discern what it tells us of our Father's heart. The law code was always flexible, and recognized priorities that arise in real life, but those priorities must be born of the Spirit.

How can you claim to have the Father's heart if you don't feel driven to obey Him? It's not that we bound by the Law codes, as if it were a rigid discipline of the flesh, but that we are obliged to live out the meaning of our spiritual birth from a burning desire in the heart. We are told in Ephesians 2:10 that the whole purpose of redemption is to change us into the kind of people who manifest the character of our Father. We manifest His character by acting within the boundaries of His Kingdom. Once again, God's Law is our privilege. We are granted a clear insight in our hearts how to live, and it tends to look just like what's written in the law codes. We aren't under Moses or Noah, but we learn from them.

In Romans 6 Paul makes a strong argument about obedience as the inheritance of the Spirit. Way too many people take verse 14 out of context, attempting to set up a conflict between law and grace; the law is a marker, a stage on the path of grace. He's explaining to Jewish Christians in Rome, as well as Gentile Christians familiar with Judaism, how it was all supposed to work. Throughout chapters 5 and 6 Paul goes on and on about how we have crucified the sinful flesh. All that the flesh knew of God was the law code that it could not obey fully. Under grace, the law is within easy reach.

The Law was a gift of grace that awakened our consciousness of sin. Without that, we would never know we needed redemption; we would never seek it. The law code points out things that don't belong with the Spirit. So, with our death to sin, and our realization of spiritual birth, how could we keep treating the Law as a restriction on fun? We aren't under the authority of the Law, but we are under the authority of the Spirit through whom the Law was revealed. It's a step up the same path, from the lower station of the Law to the higher place of the Spirit behind the Law.

So, the issue now is assessing what we should learn from those two Law Covenants.

Chapter 12: The Devourer

First, a little motivation for the struggle.

You should understand by now that we do not strictly observe the law codes in the Bible, but we fulfill them through our convictions. It's not that your heart needs to learn, but that your flesh needs to learn what to expect from the heart. Often, when your mind stumbles across some fresh expression of truth, your mind goes, "Aha!" But your heart says, "Yep, I knew that was the truth." Your heart already knew but hadn't yet been able to pass that down to the resistant mind. That the heart was trying to get the message across is why the mind was at all primed to receive it.

We approximate the law code in our hearts. The mind will never really get it completely, so it's a lifelong struggle. Our minds must learn to adopt the intent of the law code, in the sense of what it tells us about the Person of our Lord. The closer we get to His moral character, the more we shine with His glory. And His glory is the only reason we live on this earth. It should be our nature to seek His glory, our first instinct when we live with our conscious awareness centered in our hearts, instead of in our heads. We grasp the heart of the law codes by the Presence of the Spirit. So, a critical part of this brain-training is bouncing things off our convictions.

What did God promise Israel if they obeyed? Malachi 3 eloquently portrays a renewal of the Covenant of Moses. What would happen if the nation were to return to that covenant in their hearts? The prophet lists some of the current errors of the people, including a massive failure to recognize that they were under the feudal ownership of Jehovah. Everyone in that day and age understood feudal obligations. It was living as children under a father figure who loved and protected you, guiding and planning how things should go for the long-term health, safety and prosperity of the whole household together. If the people then refuse to give back into the family storehouse a fair portion of their individual prosperity, they are robbing the Lord, not to mention the whole family.

But if they go back to doing what the covenant requires of them as proper feudal vassals, then God promised:

*"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,"
Says the Lord of hosts;
"And all nations will call you blessed,
For you will be a delightful land,"
Says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:11-12 NASB 1977)]*

They would be fruitful, safe and life would be pleasant (which defines the blessings of /shalom/). But who is the Devourer?

Every eastern potentate had two primary servants in his court: a right-hand man (his heir) and a left-hand man (his punisher). We know about the Son, but our Western mythology has horribly perverted the image of the Punisher. Satan is God's left-hand, not His enemy. There is no rivalry; the Son has always outranked the Punisher. Satan did not want the Crucifixion, because he knew the Resurrection would follow. Satan is our Enemy – that's his job.

He's supposed to keep watch for disobedient servants, and then report back to the Lord. He makes a case for punishing the unfaithful servant (he's also called the Accuser). If the Lord agrees as Judge, then the servant is delivered to the authority of the Punisher. The Punisher becomes the Devourer of all the blessings that the servant would normally receive in his daily

life. The Lord's servant is forced to work for the prosperity of the Devil.

Picture in your mind Joseph serving in the jail under Pharaoh. The jailer was Pharaoh's left-hand man. Joseph got room and board but didn't receive any profit from his labor. That's how it is with Satan. He is permitted to consume some portion of our blessings based on the nature and depth of our betrayal.

So, this business of walking in God's Law places a shield between you and the Accuser. It's not a question of merit, though at times the Accuser may try to tell you that. Rather, it's a question of whether we are annoying the Father and His moral sensibilities. If we make Him look bad, we are not at peace with Him. If He sees that your heart is in the right place, your performance failures can be forgiven. Notice what Samuel said about the sacrificial rituals:

*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22 NASB 1977).*

Also, see Numbers 15:27-31 – there is no sacrifice for willful sin. Even under Moses, God was looking at the heart.

If your heart is devoted to making Him smile, He will turn aside the claims of the Devourer in your life. God plays favorites, so the issue is remaining among His favorites. It's a question of your devotion to Him. There is always the fudge factor of facing natural consequences, but you are the only one with the authority to destroy your peace with God. That's what the Hebrew word *shalom* was all about: peace with God. It is living in harmony with God's moral character, boosting His reputation.

Don't get lost focusing on the provisions of the law codes. Get lost in the personal love of the Father. When we comply with the intent of the Law, it grows a thorny hedge around your life that Satan can't penetrate. That hedge gets watered and fertilized by your conscientious effort to understand what makes God smile. It makes your *shalom* a whole lot richer because the Devourer isn't grabbing much of it. Just ask your convictions; they'll tell you the right answer every time.

The struggle is whipping your flesh into obedience to your convictions.

Chapter 13: True Witness

So, being faithful to God's Law is a privilege.

It's a relief to be free to live by God's design for human existence. With divine revelation, we are permitted insight into the fundamental workings of reality. We aren't condemned to live with the moral blindness inherent in trusting human capabilities.

This puts us in harmony with Creation. It makes us friends and allies to the natural world. You should have no trouble stepping out into a natural setting and sensing the harmony and friendship. Your heart is wired for that. Indeed, Scripture consistently refers to the natural world as celebrating God's glory, as if it were alive in the sense of consciousness. Jesus made demands of the natural world as if it were a person or a group of people. Perhaps this isn't just poetic drama, but something very real.

You realize, of course, how this puts us very much at odds with society. Our society is founded on alienation from Creation. If we quite honestly seek to spend time in natural settings to worship our Father, to gain some strong sense of stability and purpose, to find a sense of peace and joy, then this puts us entirely outside the realm of where most of our world lives. And yet, this is precisely what the Bible teaches. Jesus Himself often went out to lonely and isolated

natural settings. He had a thing for rocky hilltops and the wind, or shadowed gardens away from human traffic. It's not because nature is itself quiet; the Psalms say that the earth itself sings of divine glory. The point is that He went out to hear the right kind of noise, and it was away from the noise of fallen humanity.

Humanity is fallen; the natural world is not.

How far away from society should we try to be? No mere human can answer that for you. However, it seems every time we find people truly at peace with God in the Bible, it's because they aren't very much involved in common human affairs. Even if we find His people right in the middle of the royal courts, for example, they still maintain an internal distance, a quiet reserve that makes them seem present, but in reality, some part of them is far away. The closer we are to God, the less interest we have in what seems to drive so much of the human race.

With all the surveillance in our modern world, there is one thing those outside the covenant can never detect, much less understand: the divine communion in our hearts. It's a link to God that Satan himself cannot snoop. That wordless yearning in our hearts for God is closed to him, though Satan can see the symptoms of it, and hear our spoken prayers.

When you are faithful to the Law of God, Satan is pushed back. He is kept at a distance. That's the same distance we would naturally have with the Devil's servants among the human race. The only people who discern any part of what's in your heart are those who have the same kind of compulsion for being closer to God. Hearts can talk, though we may not be consciously aware of what has passed between our hearts and that of someone else. And if we are aware, it may be impossible to put into words or discrete thoughts.

It's not possible to explain this phenomenon in words. There is some clinical evidence, but only if you first credit the idea of hearts communicating on their own wavelength. The clinical data means nothing without some *a priori* assumption that admits the reality of things unseen. It's real and quite powerful to people familiar with it.

Thus, everything important in the Kingdom of Heaven comes cloaked in a kind of plausible deniability. If you aren't part of Eternity, then there is no eternity for you.

We know that John Calvin made much of the biblical doctrine of predestination. But then he spoiled it all by trying to make it logical. In the process, he felt compelled to assert things that are manifestly false. Calvinist teaching is loaded with unnecessary logical junk. Scripture says nothing at all about how and why God decides to awaken people who are spiritually dead. We are told to act like it's a possibility for everyone to awaken, yet we are warned that most never will.

The key to our witness in this world is not the actions, but the connection between hearts. Anyone can act like they truly believe the Word of Truth and gain a fairly solid intellectual grasp of the principles. And God can still use people like that. But if you operate by the heart, you'll know on some level that they aren't on the same wavelength as you. You may not know whether they are spiritually awake, but you will know how you must handle them.

It's not a question of objective fact. It's a question of what God wants you to do in your own mission for Him. When you can escape the obsession with objectively verifiable facts, when you can break those chains off of your reckoning, and become more deeply aware of what it is that God demands of you, then your witness is purified. The very act of withdrawing from the common run of human activity will speak on a heart wavelength to those who need to hear it. Obeying God's Law and claiming all the blessings of His Word is not enough by itself. There must be that living, flaming connection between your heart and the living truth of the Father woven into Creation. The people our Lord wishes to awaken will be touched on that level of the heart.

People without that heart-borne sensitivity will feel only an exclusion. This is also the voice of God. In any setting, at least some of those present will think you are remote, aloof, or any number of similar ideas. Even if you are directly involved in them emotionally, they are going to feel a distance. They should; that's part of how God awakens the consciousness of sin.

So, you can be actively involved in that communication between hearts, or you can passively move along without a clue. God will speak with or without our conscious awareness of His power and plans. He doesn't need us but will use us anyway. He's always glad to have His children play in His workshop, showing us how He does things. But we don't necessarily have to be aware of Him using us for it to happen. Yet, oh, the blessings of being involved consciously because we have taken the path of the heart.

This is the true nature of our witness in this world.

Chapter 14: Covenant Peace

Without a covenant identity, you have no peace with God.

There are several covenants in Scripture. First is the Covenant of the Fall. This is the default for humanity until Christ Returns. It is more precisely a proto-covenant, signaling that we must seek a covenant with the Lord. In it we are notified of the Curse of the Fall, some of its provisions, and a promise that redemption is possible. The Flaming Sword at the Gate of Eden symbolizes the fundamental law code, the threat of wrath for sin. You must face the Flaming Sword to restore peace with God.

But the Flaming Sword (law code) here is quite simple: Restore the primacy of the heart and stop trusting human capabilities to discern good and evil. Choosing to trust human mental and emotional analysis is the core of the fallen nature. Redemption means trusting faith instead. Stop for a moment and contemplate: Everything you do has moral consequences. If all you have is your fleshly capability – senses and reason – then you cannot possibly know the will of God because He speaks only in the heart, not in the intellect. Your heart is the only part of you capable of hearing from God. The Forbidden Fruit symbolizes the instinct to trust our senses and reason to tell us what really matters. Stop eating from the Tree of Knowledge and pass through the Flaming Sword to restore access to the Tree of Life. Without the Tree of Life, we are mortal.

As mankind drifted farther and farther from the Gate of the Garden, God in His mercy extended fresh covenants of peace. The next one we see announced, but not exactly spelled out, is the Covenant of Noah. It established the principle of feudal authority, something fundamental to all life on the earth. Reality itself is feudal. There must be a human agent of God's authority (a government) to carry out the wrath of God on sin. If you spill blood without justification before the Lord, your blood must be spilled consequently (blood is a big deal with all God's covenants). The Scripture summarizes without giving us the details. We learn later from ancient Hebrew oral tradition that this covenant does have specific provisions everyone knew for a very long time (you can look up the *Seven Noahic Laws* but Acts 15 covers it pretty well).

Still, mankind continued to drift farther and farther. While the Tower of Babel narrative offers no word on any covenant, it does enunciate the principle that human life on the earth must be fractured and decentralized, along with being feudal, to have any hope of peace with God. This serves as an extension of Noah in terms of being a prerequisite.

Then we come to the Covenant of Abraham. This is the first covenant of personal redemption, an offer of covenant identity as members of God's household. Notice how we are told that it was not Abraham's literal descendants, but his spiritual heirs who receive the covenant identity (Romans 4, Galatians 3). Thus, while it has a law code component (Noah), the nature of the covenant is

personal feudal commitment to God as adopted family. The ritual for this covenant (wading in a pool of blood between slaughtered animal halves) contained a warning that covenant identity would put you at odds with the rest of the world (the oven). Persecution and tribulation in this world are expected when you seek peace with God, but you need never doubt what revelation demands of you (the torch).

The Covenant of Moses was a national identity covenant. It was an approach to the Covenant of Abraham, and a more particular implementation of Noah. The whole idea was to grant sufficient covering that God would reveal Himself more clearly to a world ready to hear more of His truth. Israel was supposed to provide an identity based on this suzerain-vassal treaty (feudalism again) of adoption. It signaled that a closer and stronger identity was possible, but that the law code could not supply that directly. Rather, the law code provided a path for grasping at the nature of the issue: a heart committed to God's ways.

That covenant ended at the Cross. Everything Jesus did up through His death was under the Covenant of Moses, so as to fulfill all the provisions of it on both ends (man and God). Since the nation had drifted so far as to vacate the Covenant of Moses, Jesus had to fulfill the mission of the covenant: to manifest the Word of God in a personal living form. Israel was supposed to do this by living according to the law code, but never could stay faithful. By the time God's Law showed up in a human form (the Messiah), they rejected it. So, that covenant was closed on the Cross and everything defaulted. The Covenant of Abraham was renewed in the risen Christ and the rest of the world remained liable under the Covenant of Noah, as it always had been.

Notice again: Moses was a very specific implementation of Noah. It was for a particular time, place and people. It was a relatively short passage of human time, when you think about the vast sweep of human existence. The national identity of Israel was never a matter of DNA; it was always the Covenant of Moses. If you wanted to worship and serve Jehovah as a Gentile, without becoming an Israeli, you were taught Noah. Moses did not fail, but it was God Himself who fulfilled Moses by sending His own Son. So, now that it's closed, humanity has the one option: Christ as the living Covenant of God.

But now, Noah is not a path to Jesus. Rather, Noah is the hands and feet of Jesus. Christ incarnates Himself in His people. But your hands and feet (your mortal body) do not go to Heaven. Thus, they remain under Noah, with or without Christ. But with Christ in your heart, acting according to Noah becomes instinctive.

Aside from the residual tradition of Jewish Christians electing to live by Moses – as Jesus taught it – all of Christianity manifests, in terms of law code, as Noah. It's symbolized by the rainbow in the imagery of God's Throne in the Book of Revelation. This being the case, we need to understand what Noah requires of the world. Without the witness of Noah in our hands and feet, we fail to provide a witness of conviction against the fallen nature. The world must become aware that it is fallen, and we are that witness against sin.

Let's examine what it means to live Noah, having peace with God.

Chapter 15: Covenant or Not?

The Covenant of Christ is a feudal covenant, as is Noah.

Feudalism is the underlying assumption of everything God says about human existence. Without embracing a feudal covenant, you cannot have peace with God. Granted, it is highly unlikely that you live under a human government that obeys this requirement, so it is something you must embrace for yourself. It is most certainly how churches are supposed to be organized; no church is valid otherwise. This does not prevent church members from embracing the truth individually. Even more so do we as human need a sharper view of individual faith as society

moves farther and farther from the Garden of Eden.

No marriage is valid in God's sight unless it is a feudal covenant. Try to understand that the Lord will work through a marriage that starts on the wrong foot, just as He will almost any other bad situation from which we find Christ. However, the full blessing of peace with God requires that both husband and wife must come together in the feudal covenant of Christ. And note that sex under any other standard is inherently evil. All human sexual relations are evil unless sex comes within a proper feudal covenant marriage.

That's a major issue. Holding to this standard separates us from almost the whole of Western Civilization. It's one man, one woman, paired for life under a biblical covenant of faith in Christ. There is no justification for sex otherwise. This is the biblical standard under all valid law and faith covenants.

Take a moment to note that a covenant community could come together and formulate a valid church family if their covenant is based on the Covenant of Christ. The reason they might formulate something unique is to bring the gospel message to bear on their unique context. Individuals can also do something of the same thing, proposing a covenant with the Lord that reflects what He has already revealed in His Son. The purpose is to manifest the same divine covenant in your own unique situation.

So, for example, if you live under Western Civilization, your covenant might mention a rejection of Western culture as morally inferior to a lifestyle of following Christ. That provision isn't mentioned in the Bible simply because the West had not yet been born at the time of Christ. However, you'll find in Scripture the example of denouncing the Roman Empire as "the Beast" for similar reasons. Your covenant statement should reflect your devotion to Christ alone in your own context.

Sometimes it does well to state in your covenant something that was taken for granted by Noah and Christ. We've noted above how this includes a feudal covenant community, even if it's just a community of you and Christ alone. Creation is feudal in nature. We might do well to state this openly, as it's no longer obvious. You may need to state a proper sexual standard. A couple more things that become major issues for us today were taken for granted in biblical times.

First is that *everything is personal*. This is a corollary to God's Law being feudal in nature. There would be no place for impersonal contracts in Christ. Everything is person to person, commitments to God and to each other. In other words, there can be no contracts, only covenants. You cannot commit resources and future performance, but you can commit persons in personal loyalty.

Second is yet another implication of this. *All physical property must be owned by a person*. There can be no corporations. There can be no trustees, only personal guarantors. Thus, there can be no such things as community property, without a single feudal chief taking personal responsibility for it. And everyone else in the community must be clear that this chief has full authority to render decisions, even if these people have a vested interest. How the chief arrives at that decision is between him and God, but somebody has to be accountable to our Creator for people and property. Somebody somewhere – an individual person – must stand ready to take the heat for whatever happens. We'll cover this more in depth later (Chapter 31).

We must absorb these principles because they are inherent in the DNA of Creation itself. This is how God Himself views all things. We dare not defy His will in our personal outlook, and in our personal conduct, regardless if the whole world opposes us. It will require a lot of prayer and divine wisdom to handle the inevitable conflicts with those who aren't under any valid covenant. However, the one thing on which we must not compromise is that, within the covenant community of "two or more gathered in His name" this must reflect the way things are done.

We must learn to see everything in terms of whether it is or isn't under a valid covenant. Our expectations of how God does things depends on this understanding. People under His covenant will desire to obey and will be blessed accordingly. People who acknowledge no covenant will find themselves treated by God as mere cattle for mass herding.

Feudalism is woven into Creation itself.

Chapter 16: Open Floodgates

The flood of divine blessing is ready to wash through your life.

You are a servant of Christ. You are a feudal vassal of your Master. Once you awaken to your divine heritage, you begin to occupy the privileges of your role. The Father grooms you through His Son, making you fit to hold His authority on this earth. No two of us are given the exact same mission, but we broadly share the calling to boost our Lord's reputation and to increase His holdings. His true treasure is people.

In order to be properly vested as His vassal, you will be granted a domain. The amount of authority you exercise on His behalf within that domain depends on how faithful you are to His purpose in you. The more you sacrifice for His glory, the more authority you gain – in terms of both depth of sacrifice and range. You must acknowledge His authority over every element of your human existence.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is nakedly patriarchal. It wasn't just a matter of Jesus' culture, but something fundamental in Creation itself, and certainly fundamental to the Curse of the Fall. There can be no women in the priesthood, no exercising authority over men in any way. It's not the same kind of crap that characterizes Western patriarchy; the Kingdom of Heaven is best understood as rooted in the Ancient Near East. We are talking about ancient Hebrew patriarchy, the role of the shepherd. Every man is a shepherd in his domain.

Nobody will suggest that it's all neatly packaged and easy to fulfill. In the West in particular, you would be hard pressed to find men who understand this, and even more rare is the woman who is even ready to learn it. Those few of us who grasp the mystery of this feudal existence will find ourselves aliens in this world. This is a mark of greater holiness, but that is no excuse for being smug and elitist. Rather, we should be ever ready to fall on our faces before the Lord, in the presence of all humanity.

This does not make us elite. Any number of people we encounter may well be destined for roles in the Kingdom that outrank us. The only thing that makes us different is that we are farther down that path back to Eden. What makes fellowship so very hard is not the distinctions in roles, but the distance on that path. It's very hard to fellowship with people who need your experience yet refuse to recognize it. It's that issue of dominion – you cannot offer the blessings that the Father has granted you unless someone recognizes your dominion. It's not that they insult you, but they insult God; they disparage His ways and His Word.

What kind of vassal domain-holder are you? How do you represent the divine authority of the Father? Part of it will be written into your calling; part of it will be contextual. You need to contemplate this matter from time to time, because changes in the context could affect what He expects of you. But know that your obedience to His Word means you can offer to others a moral covering against the Curse. Your authority will never be absolute, though it will be substantial in cases of your own children. Still, without someone recognizing your dominion at least within the context, you cannot cover them. By the same token, if you do not recognize their limited dominion from the Father, they cannot add to your covering. Learn how to intertwine your combined authority.

It's not as if the Lord has no place for females, but it's nothing like the place Western mythology gives them. If this brings any kind of resentment, then you'll be held back, ladies. If you cannot surrender to the declaration of God regarding this, then you will be trapped in idolatry. Still, Paul made it clear that a godly woman stuck in a bad marriage to a pagan man can accomplish the miraculous works of God, so long as she listens to the convictions in her heart and obeys what she can understand from the Word. She can certainly ascend in moral authority over other women, and over children, exercising a kind of dominion in her own right. The trick is to understand what divine privilege looks and feels like, and distance yourself from the lies of this fallen world.

This issue alone makes us utterly alien to the world at large, and particularly strange to Westerners. It opens us up to persecution in many forms. It also opens the floodgates of Heaven in our hearts. This is critical to our witness, calling to the hearts of those whom the Father has prepared to receive His offer.

His power fills us to overflowing.

Chapter 17: Deep and Wide

How much, and how thorough?

Hopefully, we've established by now that faith is not some iron discipline. It is the cultivation of desire. Holiness is purifying the habits and expectations to match what God designed. There can be no static perfection because that is not how the Bible defines "perfection." Rather, perfection is meant to signal a maturity of effort to be friends with God on His terms.

The relationship is dynamic. Some elements are simply a matter of more-of-the-same. Other elements reflect the context. You should ever be asking: "How do I handle this, Lord?" After a while you gain a sense of pattern, so that your response becomes intuitive. This is the actual goal. Not that we can push it into the background, but that we build a routine of keeping Him in the center of our attention.

This book is committed to those facing tribulation and persecution. During times of God's wrath, Satan and his horde are unleashed to execute that wrath. That's their duty. Within that Old Testament imagery, we seek to build a hedge that will tend to keep those demons out of our lives. We aren't exempt from everything. It's utterly necessary that some suffering leaks into our lives simply because we remain mortal humans in a fallen world. Daniel's buddies faced the fiery furnace; we want to learn how to come through unscathed. The fire cannot burn what God protects.

So, the issue becomes a matter of how much holiness can you embrace? It's not a static standard. God's demands aren't inflexible; He's the one who is merciful and realistic about your development. The target of peace with God will never be fixed in one place in this life; it's a process, not a place. For this reason, you should envision this as the quest for what's possible according to His perception. It's a perception He always reveals to those who ask Him about it.

If you doubt that we are in a time of tribulation, this lesson remains the same: We always have a need for more holiness. Holiness will ever be a moving target. Tribulation or not, our Enemy's only source of prosperity is our unclaimed blessings, the ones we surrender to him because we don't seize them and use them. Holiness is laying hold of those blessings.

When God's wrath comes prowling, our immediate reaction should be: "Me first, Lord! Start your cleansing with me!" There should be an eagerness to face the death of our fleshly nature. His wrath never hits anything else. The only question, then, is identifying what He wants us to get rid of. The Enemy saddles us with a load of anxiety and false privilege. We need more of the

divine compassion and real privilege, the privilege of self-denial. When the mission of shining the Father's glory is all you care about, it's pretty hard for Satan to hurt you.

So, the question becomes a matter of taking stock of things you shouldn't have and marking them for disposal. Leave it behind. If you don't love those things, it hurts less when they are taken. Just how wedded are you to the Enemy's toys? Reduce your target surface to something not easily struck by temptation and sorrow. The whole point is to make you let go of those things. It's the imagery of reducing your dependency on things of this world. Learn to do with less, so that you are always ready to walk away from something that can trap you.

Yet, have no fear of making generous use of things our Father provides. He can be quite extravagant about that. Still, it becomes extravagant precisely because He can trust us not to be trapped by those things. All of Creation is just an implement for His glory. If you need something, ask. Ask according to His guidelines about provision for the mission. Then leave it in His hands to provide or not, as He sees fit. Keep your focus on what pleases Him.

Be content. When God moves, He always awakens a conviction, a desire for what He intends to do. Learn how to turn toward that. The biggest hindrance is false expectation, the structure of "necessity" as imagined by fallen human reason. It's easy to spoil the process by focusing on the product. It's never a matter of where you are going, but always a matter of following God around, of being included in what He's doing in your life. Nail human ambition to the Cross.

How much holiness do you want? What resources of your life will you employ for His glory? How deep can you dig into it? How strong will your commitment be when temptation comes? How much protection from Satan can you embrace?

It's never enough; it's never finished until He brings you Home.

Chapter 18: Bride of Christ

Religion is supposed to be a manifestation of faith.

Religion – noun; a collection of practices, both mental and physical, that manifest an inner sense of spiritual drive and purpose; may also refer to a collection of socially defined practices and beliefs that only pretend to mark any real faith, often used to govern people.

Up to now, this book has addressed what are viewed as shortfalls in mainstream Christian religion. There is no intent here to reform that mainstream, nor to start a competing institution. Rather, this is aimed at recovering something long lost regardless of the existing systems. Faith is not defined by religion, nor confined by it. Religion is the ongoing expression of faith that lives in the heart. What we should hope for is rekindling faith and breathing life into individual religion.

If the current quarantines and social restrictions persist, a great many churches will close up shop, or be reduced to mere shadows of their former selves. This is the intent of the ruling elite in our world. If it is possible to kill mainstream churches by such means, then we haven't lost much more than a mere social outlet. What the ruling elite cannot kill is genuine faith. They don't even understand it.

Science can detect the sensory activity of the heart but cannot hope to read it. The Devil cannot intercept spiritual traffic. He can sometimes delay some of your blessings, but he cannot touch your joy and peace; he cannot steal your persistence.

When Christ returns for His Bride, He won't be looking for a human institution. He'll be looking for the resolute souls who cling to Him through the persecution and tribulation, and no mere human institution can do that. He will be looking for a body of hearts who never allowed their faith to be defined by orthodoxy (approved thoughts), orthopraxy (approved practices) or

institutions. Rather, it is faith that defines those things. The Lord will seek His family, and there are precious few congregations that are much like a family clan; most are somewhat secular institution governed by discrete legal policies. These days, a significant number of people discover their spiritual inheritance despite the efforts of the institutions to confine expressions of faith to the institutional comfort zone.

A major premise of this book is the emphasis on individual faith. Nothing here will seek to constrain your religious expression of faith. Rather, we will strive to set you free. Further, we will seek to evoke an expectation of forbearance, of setting aside some portion of one's divine authority in favor of fellowship in heart. We are going to need all the warmth we can curry from fellow believers in this chilling time of tribulation. Yet, by the same token, we should aim for quality over quantity. The Scripture is filled with warnings about discernment of people trying to hijack your personal religion.

It should be a spiritual gravity that pulls you together, not some artificial constraints that enclose you from the outside. There ought to be people in your life you would turn to when nothing makes sense, people who really do seem to understand what you are going through. It won't matter if they offer emotional support so much as encouragement to face the trials. Who do you know that can walk you through a rough time? That's your real brother and sister in Christ. They don't give directions; they focus on pulling away distractions, allowing you to make your own best choices (1 Corinthians 10:23-31).

Yes, I know: We all have this instinct to look for people who appear and act just like us. That's hard-wired in the flesh, but we must temper that longing with a recognition that this is nothing more than a human instinct, a part of the Curse. It's just a symptom of the isolation we all feel, alienated from our God by being confined in a fallen mortal body. Look for something that goes much deeper; fellowship is one thing, but spiritual communion is something else. Look for people who embrace your faith, who let your religion be your own.

These are the people who enable your faith. Look for them and treasure them when you find them. Pour into their lives whatever treasure God has placed in your hands. And if you stumble across a community that features this kind of faith encouragement, then this is a worthy church. We could really benefit by redefining the meaning of the word "church." It's not an institution, not an organization as commonly defined, but a family.

Pray that the Lord leads you to such a family. Tribulation is best faced with support. Still, in the final analysis, you may end up being very much alone in your depth of conviction for a while. It may take time for God to sort things out in the souls of people who haven't yet been moved to reevaluate their faith and religion. Our God passes by with His hand of wrath to test our loyalty. If we are glad to see Him under any terms, we shall stand. If our response is seeking some refuge from His wrath, we don't belong to Him.

The saints of God will tribulate. Tribulation is our natural element, for we live in a fallen world from which we seek to escape back to Eden, and the world around us sees that as treason. They would seek to claim us as a resource for their plans to do anything at all that they can dream up, anything except what our Creator demands. The world does not own us, for we are the Bride of Christ.

When He comes for us, what will make us glorious and unashamed is how thoroughly we have prepared ourselves for this final act of union. The pure and unstained arraignment will be our ability to commune with each other, held together by that which every joint supplies. Not in some human institutional organization, but we should be bound by a moral union of hearts pulling together and standing firm through testing and trial. It's not the kind of thing fake churches do with lawsuits and political influence. It's the kind of thing we do that draw no media or government attention, except to condemn us for refusing to conform to their fallen

expectations.

Your religion is your own, but faith makes us family.

Chapter 19: Standing Firm

Don't get tired of handling persecution.

This should be relatively simple: During times of tribulation, the primary means of witnessing for Christ is living His Word. It's not something you can do with your head; it must be in your heart. Notice the pattern in the Book of Acts. The Apostles go out to some new place and start preaching in the village marketplace, where news was typically announced to the public. Once a few folks believe and a church gets started, you never hear any more about preaching in the town square. You do hear a lot about going back and strengthening the new churches, though.

The core of the Great Commission is not preaching, but living the truth in front of the people wherever you are. It's not even putting on any kind of display, but simply living the revelation of God.

Of course, it didn't take long for the Judaizers to chase down the new churches wherever the Apostles went. The primary game of Judaizers was trying to bring new Christians, both Gentiles and Jews, back under the Talmud. A major element in that plan was to introduce the same kind of legalistic analysis of Scripture that had captured the Jewish rabbis three centuries before Christ. By and large, the Judaizers succeeded long term, not in making churches adopt Talmudism, but in convincing them to become legalistic. They came to insist that faith was in the head as rational content.

The early controversies give proof that the church leaders after the first century had gone down the path of semantic nit-picking, trying to nail down a legalistic orthodoxy. In doing so, they surrendered the ground of battle to the heretics. They seemed unable to use standard Hebrew mystical reasoning to answer the Aristotelian nit-picking of the heretics.

Thus, within another two centuries after the last Apostle passes, Constantine captured the church. His only interest was in using Christian religion as a politically unifying force. Meanwhile, he continued his worship of the sun until on his death bed. His pagan influence remains in Christian religion today.

What we face today is a certainty of tribulation, and a very real threat of persecution. One of the hardest things for us will be the pressure from established churches. Granted, economics will shut down some of the larger institutions, but the remaining presence of Westernized Christian religion will still haunt us. They could easily contribute their own brand of persecution against us, making things worse than necessary.

In 1 Peter, we see the advice that the Apostle gave to Jewish Christians in what is today northern Turkey as they faced heavy persecution. These new believers outgrew the Talmudic law. The unconverted Jews they left behind were using every bit of Roman law they could to oppress what they regarded as religious traitors. They lied to Roman authorities about how these renegades were breaking various laws. Peter's advice to his readers is that they stand strong in faith.

He warned that they would lose property and suffer harassment from authorities. However, the only way to deal with this was to uphold a strong life of faith and compassion. By this means, they would prove their accusers to be liars. It's no secret that in many locales during this time across the Roman Empire that local Gentiles regarded the Christians highly. The only way to fight back against persecution was to have a strong testimony. That's always been the whole point of tolerating life in this world in the first place.

If you absorb any teaching from this book, you will likely be rejected by the mainstream

churches. While they may not be as scheming as the Jews were with Jewish Christians, it will nonetheless show up in various ways when things start getting tough. Mainstream churches will start to blame us for their problems. We have to show that they are wrong by harvesting the blessings of God's promises.

Ever hear of Richard Wurmbrand? He was a writer who lived under the old Soviet Empire and kept a record of stories of persecution. He wrote several books about it. What you'll find in those books is that he consistently ignores mainstream orthodoxy and points out how the real issue is faith in Jesus Christ. The people who stood firm might be all over the map theologically, but what they had in common was something that drove them through the most difficult times, standing firm in their commitment to Christ. We need more of that again today.

Do you suppose we can escape the sins of the early church leadership?

Chapter 20: Expect Harassment

Get ready; it's coming.

Peter warned his Jewish Christian friends not to think that trials and tribulations are so strange, as if God isn't doing His job (1 Peter 4:12-16). His own Son went through it. Indeed, Jesus Himself warned that if we truly follow Him, we should expect the same reception He got (John 15:18-25). Finally, His brother James teaches that it's actually a blessing (James 1:2-8).

Every day you can read stuff from people claiming to be Christians who spout off in rage about how their rights were violated. America was never a Christian country. In order to claim that, there would have to be a feudal tribal covenant, and the US Constitution looks nothing like that. All biblical covenants are feudal and tribal. Any other organizational structure means that there is no covenant and God is not involved. It cannot be a Christian government otherwise. The whole concept of rights is pagan.

What our American founding fathers called "Christian" was just Enlightenment Deism. They proclaimed that the Bible was good for the people, but the leaders themselves saw no problem with ignoring it, or even editing it by cutting things out. When you use the law of the land, don't confuse it with God's Law.

You should never be surprised when sinners commit sin. We take it in stride. Cynicism is not a sin. It's not that most people are decent, but they want to believe they are. They are ripe for manipulation. Their sense of moral obligation tends to reflect what they perceive is the contextual value system. Virtue signaling is a major preoccupation with the average resident of the U.S. And you can bet that genuine Christian faith is not in vogue right now with any crowd.

So, if you open your mouth and speak anything that we've discussed in this book so far, you should expect harassment. You can predict it; you know it's coming. Sometimes you'll get people to shake their heads in agreement on some issues, but these are the same folks who will join the crowd when it's mostly social justice warriors. If you stand for God's Law, you'll be tagged an enemy, with all kinds of silly labels indicating how awful they believe you are.

It's important that you know for certain your calling and mission. Don't pick fights just because you can find sin in what you see around you. Only in some rare cases will it be your duty to point out that sin verbally. Most of the time, it's enough to simply live your faith. People can tell; their own hearts will convict a lot of them due to the powerful field of grace emanating from your heart.

The last thing you want to do is shove it in someone's face. This is especially true when that someone does not share your faith. You see, every time the Bible talks about how you treat your "neighbor," it's referring to people who share your covenant commitment, not random

strangers. If they aren't under a commonly recognized covenant of faith, they are outsiders, not neighbors, regardless of the proximity of residence. There are limits to what you can do for them, and their sins aren't your problem until they directly threaten something or someone God placed under your dominion.

Don't play chivalrous; that's a pagan concept. When the organized Roman Church was under siege from the invading Germanic hordes during the 5th through 7th Centuries, church leaders eventually figured out the pagan Germanic mythology and tweaked the gospel message to fit that. The idea that women are morally superior to men was a pagan myth of the Germanic tribes, and that's where chivalry comes from. Be polite and friendly when possible, even gracious and serving, but toss chivalry in the trash; it's idolatry.

God's Word says that men are moral guardians for their women, because women are wired to be flexible about such things. They can be quite mistaken about moral issues. Draw the boundaries and stand for His truth. Know that you will catch Hell for it. Decide in your heart what the context requires of you and don't back down.

Prepare to rejoice when you are persecuted like Jesus was.

Chapter 21: Walking Alone

Avoid binary thinking.

Paul argued with Peter and Barnabas, and other fellow believers. It was never a question of who was right, but whether they could continue working together. Paul operated under very firm convictions; he knew what was required of him. It didn't matter what God might require of someone else. They should obey their own convictions. (The issue with Peter was that he disobeyed his own stated convictions.)

So, in some of his letters, Paul was known to teach that people should mind their own business. If you are sure God is leading you in certain ways, go with it. If someone else is led in another direction, don't get the idea that they can't be hearing from God just because He tells them something different. There's plenty of room to cooperate in fellowship without allowing little differences to hold things up while you argue about it. Don't argue. Just evaluate whether you can continue working together. Paul separated from Barnabas at one point for that reason.

The last thing you should want to do in a time of persecution is add to the woes of believers by pressuring them to become uniform in any human sense. Paul said we have one Lord and one faith, not one denomination and one theology. You shouldn't have to defend yourself from verbal attacks just because someone feels led in a different direction. Agree to stay out of each other's way and get on with the mission.

God will lead His people in conflicting directions. He is not restricted by our sense of logic about that. A critical part of what churches were supposed to do was teach how to handle the inevitable differences. It's not a zero-sum game where somebody has to win, and somebody has to lose. God is not restricted to binary logic; binary logic is peculiar to Western thinking and is not found in the Bible.

Theology is just one man's reasoning about what Scripture demands of him. Nothing in the Bible supports the idea that there can be only one right intellectual path for everyone. Again, there is no such thing as "objective truth." The question is not who's right. The question is what God demands of you.

In your life there will be brothers and sisters you need to work with, and some you need to avoid. There are some who will claim Christ and you should not believe it. Not in the sense of you claiming to know whether they are spiritually born, but whether God wants you to treat

them as fellow believers. Operate as if there are alternate realities overlapping. In your reality, some people who claim faith in Christ are simply good, hired servants in the Kingdom, with no real vested interest. Again, it's not that you can claim to know how God views them, but how He wants you to deal with them.

And an enemy is defined as anyone who seeks to tear down your faith. There are a whole bunch of church folks who get very pushy about trying to make others conform to their way of doing things. It might be how they dress, how they talk, etc. You should develop a discernment for these folks because they are such a common problem. Some of them can be quite relentless, arguing nonstop until you either surrender or stay away from them. They are working in the flesh, not the Spirit of the Lord. Treat them as enemies of your faith.

As always, never be surprised when conflict arises, even between folks who genuinely love each other. Never be surprised when sinners sin. A lot of religious folks harassed Jesus and nailed Him to the Cross. Stand on your convictions, but never shove them down anyone's throat. Know your own mission well enough to be certain of those things you can simply avoid. Don't worry about things God has not put in your hands.

Always be ready to walk alone with Christ, especially in a Western social context.

Chapter 22: Covenant of Noah

Again, the best response to persecution and tribulation is greater holiness.

So, we have covered a lot of basics in the sense of trying to shift our thinking from American in particular, and Western in general, to a genuine biblical orientation. By and large, that means an ancient Hebrew orientation, since a major element in Jesus' ministry was calling His nation back to the ancient ways of the Covenant of Moses. Every dispute He had with the Pharisees and Sadducees was a matter of their departure from the ancient Hebrew ways God gave Israel.

Keep in mind that Judaism is essentially Pharisaism. As such, it is elitist and generally spiteful to the common Israeli folk. Toward the end of John 7, we see how the crowds were moved by Jesus' teaching. It tugs at their hearts and brings conviction. When the Pharisees sent Temple Guards to arrest Jesus, they were unable to do so. There was something spellbinding in His message. Notice what the Pharisaical leaders say: "But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

Do you remember when Jesus told His disciples something about how being wealthy could hinder your salvation? His disciples were shocked, only because, for their whole lives they were pickled in the teaching that material prosperity was a mark of God's favor. And while they seldom said so outright, this implied that the Pharisees were convinced being poor meant that God didn't like you. And the Scribes and Pharisees tied this to knowing "the Law" as they knew it.

Keep in mind, when they used the term "the Law," they aren't referring to the Pentateuch, but to the Talmud. This was the grounds on which they were judging Jesus. The people were unlikely to know much about either Moses or the Talmud because Moses was seldom taught in the synagogues. So, when the Old Testament was read, it was always through the lens of Hellenized legalistic reasoning. Thus, even when teaching from Moses, they were teaching the Talmud, rather like an obscuring mess overlaying the written word. Further, it was taught in a way that was spiteful to the common Judean citizen.

The Pharisees were greedy and materialistic. They kept secret teachings that favored them, and the common folks never found out until they went to court, where the secret legal provisions came into play. Jesus condemned them for "devouring widows' houses" and oppressing anyone

who didn't have a good Pharisaical lawyer. It wasn't Roman taxes that were high, but Herodian taxes and Temple taxes ate people alive. Even today, in Jewish ghettos around the world, rabbis still oppress and tax heavily any Jew who isn't a rabbi.

So, when we draw from rabbinical tradition, it requires a very sharp and cynical mind to see through the Pharisaical lies. What that in mind, let's begin turning to God's Law and examine what it requires of us. Today, the Covenant of Moses is closed; it ended at the Cross. We use it to enlighten us about Noah. It is a far more specific and expansive subset of Noah: that people, that time, that place. Moses gives us clues to Noah.

Here is the Talmudic tradition regarding the Covenant of Noah:

1. Do not worship pagan idols.
2. Do not curse Jehovah.
3. Do not take human life unjustified.
4. Do not commit adultery, bestiality, or other sexual immorality.
5. Do not steal.
6. Do not eat blood, strangled animals, or flesh torn from a living animal.
7. Establish courts of justice.

Whenever you read Old Testament history, you are supposed to know without the text saying so that this is what Israel handed to any nation that they conquered, or any community that submitted to them without actually embracing Moses and becoming Israeli. Anyone could at any time fully participate in the *shalom* of Israel as non-covenant allies by embracing these seven laws as applicable.

If you go back and examine Genesis 9, you'll see where some of this is explicitly stated. There was the issue of consuming meat with blood in it and the business of avoiding murder. It's cast heavily in terms of blood being sacred. Blood can atone for sin, but it must be handled properly. Executing a murderer is a means of using his/her blood to cleanse the land of all the blood they shed unjustly. The concept of blood-price figures large in Moses, as well.

Once more: This Covenant of Noah is binding on all human governments, regardless of whether they are aware of it. This is God's standard for all human relations, wherever it is within the created universe that humans can be found breathing. This is why visions of God's throne include the presence of a rainbow to symbolize His revelation of justice on the earth.

We will begin to examine what this means to us as persecuted believers today.

Chapter 23: Minimum Standard

It may be a tall order, but it's the minimum standard.

Notice something about the Covenant of Noah: Blood is sacred, but life is not. In Genesis 9, God granted Noah the moral freedom to prey on non-human creature as needed. However, it was necessary that the blood be drained with reverence. Something gave its life to extend and improve yours. It's partly the same when taking human life; it must be done with a sense of reverence and respect for the blood price. Blood can both foul and cleanse the land, depending on how and why it is spilled.

Also consider that it's possible to foul the land in other ways. There are others sins beside murder that defile the people and Creation itself. Those sins can require shedding blood to cleanse the land, as well. We get some specific details on that under Moses, but the principle is

inherent in God's declaration in Genesis 9. Some things threaten covenant life so badly that they merit a blood-price.

Let's look at the list of Seven Noahic Laws with a critical eye to understanding how it changes with the context. Refer to the previous chapter for the list as cited in the Talmud.

The law against pagan idolatry is not just an Israeli thing. Idolatry is destructive in itself. It leads to dissipation of life and resources chasing something that does you no good. All deities other than Jehovah are demons in disguise. Notice that it does not require people to worship Jehovah, only that they avoid worshiping anything else. We learn later in the New Testament that God was rather tolerant about this, simply because He had not pressed the issue Himself until Christ (Acts 17:22-34). It was never hard to gain His forgiveness with repentance.

It should be obvious why God doesn't tolerate blasphemy ("cursing God"). That's the act of confusing God and man, either by trying to pull God down to a human level (suggesting He's not holy) or trying to elevate someone lesser to His level (painting wings on a sinner's picture, claiming at least some humans are divine, etc.). God demands that we acknowledge Him as Creator, the one and only God. Again, up until Christ, Jehovah was rather tolerant about this in most contexts.

The issue with murder we've covered above. Again, life itself is not sacred, but blood is.

Sexual immorality is a major issue. Jesus warned that it was quite easy to get this wrong and harvest curses for it. The common modern formula is: one man, one woman, for life. All other sex is defiling. This is not just mumbo-jumbo; it's how we are wired. A human's first sex sees him/her imprinting on their partner. It alters something in their wiring and it never can be changed back. It's more obvious with women than with men, but still true. Jesus was clearly not very tolerant here, and Paul is just as strict. Again, God was tolerant of polygamy for a while, but Jesus stated flatly that it's not what God had in mind.

There's more than one way to steal. Any action you take that deprives someone of the stuff God gave them is wrong. The point is not so much how they got it, but that you must respect the idea that God didn't give it to you. Notice how this turns things around from the common Western viewpoint. This is inherent in the Decalogue with its warning against coveting. It puts the emphasis on the first-person obligation to be content with what God provides. There are caveats wrapped up in this one that we'll cover later, but the issue is fairly clear: Don't demand something God doesn't offer you.

The issue of consuming blood or flesh not properly slaughtered is not at all obvious to Westerners. Just so you'll know, we aren't talking about the reddish protein liquid that oozes from cooking meat. That's not blood. However, you can bet that most commercially sold meat is not kosher unless it says so. We aren't about kosher; Jesus ended that. What God provides is clean enough (Mark 7:17-23). The point here is that you personally must be aware of the issue of blood-price. While there's no prescribed ritual here, handling blood with reverence is required. All blood must be an offering to God, or it defiles.

The business of establishing courts of justice stands in the context of ensuring that every human lives under a feudal tribal government and society. Nothing in the Bible makes sense unless you see that woven into the background; the whole Bible assumes that background. Not just because that's what they had back then, either. It's how Creation itself is wired. It was tacitly restated at the Tower of Babel. The whole human race was forced to decentralize into little tribes, each with its own language, and eventually its own culture. And without eastern feudalism, you cannot claim to obey God's Law.

So, the court system demanded here is tribal elder court. It's a symbol of the kind of government that is required to carry out God's demand that murderers be executed. There simply must be

some human authority standing ready to offer a human blood-price for crimes that defile the tribe and threaten peace with God.

This is the minimum foundation for God to tolerate any human society. There is a great deal more implied, and we will look at that. Still, this is already more than any existing government is willing to do. But the emphasis here is not judging human government, but understanding how to begin the thinking process for understanding holiness – holiness that generates a hedge, a covering against demonic oppression.

Distinguish yourself by your testimony.

Chapter 24: Noah in the New Testament

You'll find the Covenant of Noah in Acts.

So far, we know that God's Law is a refuge from confusion and deception. It is the ultimate reality of how things work. It's a privilege to even know it, and it puts us in synchronization with Creation and our Creator's divine moral character. The Covenant of Noah is the law code level of the Covenant of Christ.

In Acts 15, we see it restated in terms of following Christ:

[I]t seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. (Acts 15:28-29)

Notice the list:

1. Abstain from pagan sacrifices. It was typical in those days to buy food from pagan temple booths, where food offered to the deities was resold at a decent discount to enrich the temple treasury.
2. Abstain from eating blood or anything that was strangled.
3. Abstain from sexual immortality.

Notice that some of the Noahic Laws aren't mentioned. There's no need to make an issue of actual idolatry with Gentile Christians, but this is an extension of the idea of ensuring that there be not so much as the appearance of supporting idolatry. It may be difficult to avoid indirect support in many ways, but this one issue had arisen often enough to receive a definitive statement.

And who could curse Jehovah's name when claiming to follow His Son? Murder was already illegal under Roman law, as was stealing; the local and Roman courts handled this well enough (and eastern feudalism was almost, with only a few exceptions). Sexual immorality was, however, a major problem. Common Greek culture was downright awful on this, encouraging all kinds of perversion. And the fact that so very much meat was sold in public markets either strangled or insufficiently bled out in that part of the world was a major problem, too. Thus, Gentile Christians were indirectly encouraged to buy from Jewish food vendors for meat.

Eventually we'll find Paul recommending that churches establish their own internal elder courts (1 Corinthians 6). While it lacked the force of the sword, people who flouted church court could be excommunicated. Again, it was meant to be a feudal tribal covenant community with elders for judges, men who were picked out as fair and focused on the welfare of the whole church body, seeking to avoid a defiling presence that gave Satan an open door.

It is not necessary to make formal lists and prolonged statements about all of this. That's not

how feudal tribal church families do things. And given the nature of the tribulation and persecution we should expect to face, it's far more important to emphasize the individual side of obedience in this book. We will be looking at what God's Law says and various ways we could seek to fulfill these things.

This is our armor against spiritual attacks.

Chapter 25: Noahic Individualism

Holiness can be a lonely calling.

Let's recap what we've learned about Noah's Covenant. The original covenant revealed in Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of blood. All blood is an offering to Jehovah. It is holy and devoted to His use alone. Any spilling of blood outside the Covenant constitutes a defilement; unjust blood literally defiles the ground, and by extension, the covenant community living on that ground.

Eating meat was never a problem, but the blood had to be drained off as an offering to the Lord. It's not about rituals but about honoring the Lord's wishes. Human bloodshed must be justified as an offering to cover the sins of bloodguilt. This is expanded under Moses to cover a lot of things that indirectly cause unjust bloodshed. Thus, capital punishment is extended; the point is that there may be plenty of good reasons to kill people that aren't explicitly stated. It is possible to become defiled with bloodguilt in terms of net effects, not merely discrete acts. The ultimate authority is God and His power to bring wrath against defiling bloodshed. However, He demands that humanity organize as feudal tribal communities with leadership that will strive to execute His justice on sinners.

The Seven Noahic Laws noted in the Talmud constitute an expanded version of the original in Genesis 9. This expansion was used by the Israeli Kingdom to grant peaceful coexistence with allies within the land, as well as tributaries they had conquered outside the land. The Seven Laws as a code are not specifically binding on us for the same reason Moses isn't: It belonged to a specific historical context that is long gone. However, the underlying meaning behind those Seven Laws do bind us. We are to honor Jehovah and His revelation regarding the nature of bloodshed.

Thus, we are still bound by the shorter list in Acts 15. We must be careful about getting entangled in anything idolatrous because all idolatry is by default the worship of demons. We really do need a strong reminder about blood being sacred to God. We also need a strong reminder about the boundaries of sexual immorality because it continues to be a major problem with our sex obsessed secular society and how it influences covenant people. Churches have let this stuff go way, way too far, while clinging to a very perverted standard that bears little resemblance to what's in Scripture.

We should not have to be told about stealing, but plundering the covenant community is a major problem still. We need to realize that the term "tithe" has been seriously abused as legalistic leverage over church members. In the Bible, the only thing tithed was agricultural produce. Very specifically, money you made as pay for work was exempted from the tithe. This ten percent thing was tied to life support, so if you worked and earned your income outside agriculture, there was no tithe. Instead, there were freewill offerings. The idea is that you should be moved by your own convictions to give, not be hammered with verbal manipulation so your church leadership can make out a budget for their convenience.

Every gift to those in need is considered a freewill offering to God. Nothing in Scripture requires you to pass it through the hands of church staff so they can peel off whatever their consciences will justify. This fraud has gone on long enough.

Finally, let's remind ourselves that this whole thing presumes a feudal tribal covenant community structure. Without this, no church is valid before the Lord. Creation itself is feudal, and tribal association is the hard-wired default for fallen humanity. Furthermore, without a valid biblical covenant that echoes Noah, there is no church at all. We need to recover a strong biblical understanding of dominion, and how it affects covering for sin.

Given the improbability of seeing Noah duly honored by Western Christianity at any time in the near future, we rightly emphasize the individual nature of building a faith and religion in the face of tribulation and persecution. Thus, while we will point out the failures of mainstream Western Christian religion, this book will focus on the implications for individual believers isolated from a genuine faith community.

Faith turns you into an alien creature.

Chapter 26: No Rights

Humanity is fallen; the rest of Creation is not.

Creation doesn't owe you anything. You are born at enmity with God and all He has made. The mere existence of a mortal body is all the proof you need to know that you are born under a cursed rejection of God's authority and His divine moral character. There is a brief period of innocence in childhood while we develop our first sense of moral obligation, but once we can comprehend right from wrong as a fundamental concept, we are accountable to God for the sins of Adam and Eve.

We are not inside the Garden of Eden, and we are not eating from the Tree of Life. Instead, we still have that bite of the Forbidden Fruit in our mouths. We are mortal, burdened with a fallen nature that fights God instinctively. For this reason alone, we deserve a short and miserable life, a lingering painful death, and eternity in Hell.

Do you see how this divine truth conflicts with the notion of "human rights"? Consider for a moment: The source of any thoughts about human rights is the vain imagination of fallen creatures who reject their predicament. First, we have the idolatry of fallen human reason. Second, we have this subsidiary false deity of rights arising solely from the arrogance of human reason in rejection of God's righteous judgment. It seeks to raise a standard to which God is held accountable by man. It's madness.

The notion that certain constitutional rights (in the US) and general human rights (among globalists) were given by God is sheer nonsense. Nothing in Scripture supports that notion. Instead, God granted certain provisional privileges to a handful of people who embrace His covenants. There is nothing static about this; nothing exists outside the dynamic relationship with a living God. The theory of rights is meant to depersonalize things, and depersonalizing relationships is dehumanizing. God says if you aren't actively relating to Him moment by moment, you are morally dead. Without that constant reliance on Him, you cannot claim anything from Him.

More to the point, you must be in covenant with Him. **God offers no blessings outside of His covenants.** If you are not in covenant with Him, you are just an accursed beast, a sad creature who is morally fallen in a universe that is still in communion with Him. Your status is beneath the rest of Creation; you are under a curse. Entering into covenant with God restores you to the status as God's created managers for the universe. There is no middle ground.

You may allege that other cursed fallen humans owe you something, but God does not honor that. He is under no obligation whatsoever to enforce it. You are left to the random chances of an unguided universe. Thus, the language of rights is an idol, a false deity that is backed only by

demons seeking to keep you from God's covenants. It's a trick of Satan. To escape it, you must first reject the concept of human rights. Then you begin reaching for divine privileges. And the path to those privileges is through His covenants.

There is one slender ground of privilege that allows you to resist the tyranny of human governments: You must be under a covenant tribal government. Your tribe has some limited permission from God to fight back against threats. If your tribe has a valid biblical covenant identity, then you have some leverage to seek God for protection. You can seek His face for covering when your tribe does battle.

Here's the problem: Right now, your tribe is not self-aware. Granted, a great many Christians talk about a Christian identity, but it's not valid. It's not based on the Hebrew thinking inherent in Scripture. It's based on Enlightenment thinking, a mishmash of Germanic pagan mythology and Greco-Roman pagan philosophy. Sure, you would struggle to find a valid covenant church body obeying the requirement for a feudal tribal structure. If you should stumble across one, it won't be big enough to even consider resisting secular government tyranny.

It's just vaguely possible that you can come together with other believers in *ad hoc* covenant communion experiences. That's always sweet when it happens. Sometimes you can hang onto those small groups long term, though it tends to be just random individuals here and there. Going through the work of building a genuine tribal feudal covenant household is simply not likely, in part because it is so very much work. You must come together as a single household. Everything in our laws and social structure militate against it, and we would all have a long haul individually learning all over again how to be a part of an ancient Hebrew feudal household, based on covenant relations, and not DNA. It can be done, and should be done, but it's a monumental task.

So aside from the *ad hoc* fellowship that we might encounter here and there, we are pretty much alone in this time of tribulation. That's not to say God can't still call and empower you to resist, but that it's highly unlikely. It will end up being a matter of resisting specific demands that your convictions won't permit. And then you'll have to work out the tactics of your resistance. You'll still have to wait on God to see if He intends to give you any measurable success on the ground, or if He wants you to resist on principle alone, with plans to let you face the consequences for His glory.

You can still operate under the covering of a covenant, but only if you consciously embrace the covenant identity offered in Christ. And that covenant identity is visible to humans and to Creation through the Covenant of Noah. This is the starting point.

There are no rights, only privileges.

Chapter 27: Romancing the Covenant

What is covenant love?

The Covenant of Noah assumes that you favor your convictions over your reasoning, that you will operate in terms of feudal dominion, and that you must maintain a tribal covenant identity – even if there's no literal tribe around you. These are prerequisites before you even start to engage the law code. The law code isn't about rights but is your divine privilege as a Child of the Covenant. We are not like the rest of the world.

One of the biggest differences is that we are instinctively prudish. There's no legalism, but when the Covenant deeply holds your heart, you'll look away from someone who shows too much flesh. It will make you uncomfortable. Stay with the Covenant long enough and it all becomes very tiring that people keep strutting around like that. If you can see what they've got, you don't

want it.

There is no fundamental right to affection, companionship and sex. This is a high privilege, a sacred blessing from the Lord, and it comes only on His terms. If you seek it any other way than His way, it will become a source of sorrow and degradation. It cannot work any other way. Life is difficult enough in fallen mortal flesh when you do it right; you cannot gain any kind of blessing from doing it wrong.

We are seeking to build a life, real Life, according to divine design. With that life comes promises that God will provide all our needs, but it is “need” based on His glory. His glory in your life is properly understood only in terms of His calling and mission. Peace with God is a living thing itself, requiring that you nourish it by obedience. It is not that strong until later in the game. You must invest more in the moral infrastructure on the front side for small returns, but it yields a greater harvest later. You must take on the long-term perspective, across multiple generations. You are just one stone in a long road across the human landscape.

That’s why you can never trust your fleshly inclinations. The whole issue of what makes a good spouse is bound up in your calling. There is no way around this: God works through the man’s calling and mission to bless everyone around him, and that applies most completely to his spouse. This is not reasonable, but it is what faith will tell you, and it is certainly what Scripture tells you. The woman’s mission is her man. She doesn’t have to be silent, but if she ever gets any inkling of being a competitor with her man, she is thinking outside the Covenant. Either she is on the same team, or she is in sin.

For men, they are required to be a shepherd, someone who genuinely and tenderly seeks the welfare of his woman. But he cannot allow her to make decisions that threaten the moral fabric of the mission. She may be a problem at times, but she is also part of the mission. How he deals with her is a part of his testimony. The most critical issue in our world today is that the man finds a way to enforce her devotion to his moral reputation. If she isn’t his biggest cheerleader in public and private, she is a threat to God’s glory. If there is one thing he must demand, it is that she never detract from his reputation; his reputation is her testimony. There is no single model of how to get there, only the command that you do get there.

Granted, most believers today enter the Covenant with baggage from their previous life, including a high probability of already having a marriage that fundamentally violates the Covenant. You should expect that a majority of people seeking a Covenant life are saddled with a faulty marriage. The Bible has high standards; you can walk away from a marriage that threatens your obedience to the gospel, but you should not seek another. Don’t think of it in terms of breaking rules. It’s destructive to pursue a subsequent marriage. It will never work out like you imagine, especially in regard to sexual imprinting. Too much of what you need is already spent and gone; you will enter a subsequent marriage crippled. That’s not to say nothing good will come from it, but that you are asking for sorrow and trouble; the burden is exceptionally high.

On the other hand, no Covenant brother or sister should ostracize you for a subsequent marriage, especially if you divorced someone who was hostile to your faith. This is not a matter for tribal discipline. However, the tribe has a reduced obligation, and it will tend to show in their lack of enthusiasm (if they have any sense at all). It makes you a weaker member, someone who is not mature enough to face the sorrows of your own bad life choices. Even if you have little say in things, the burden is on you to face the things God has put in your life. There is no fairness and equality in the Covenant, nor should we expect it.

During times of serious tribulation, when the scene of human existence around you is in upheaval, marriage is a much lower priority in the first place. It becomes an expensive burden that may not contribute much at all to your mission. It’s not as if we can breed a Covenant tribe

into existence; it's not a matter of DNA but of divine calling. Proper child rearing cannot create spiritual birth. God can build His covenant tribe from the rocks on the ground. So, when Paul says that it's a good idea to think long and hard before engaging in romance and marriage, try to see that the context for which he wrote shares a lot with ours today. Roman persecution was on the rise, and governments today are taking the same ugly path.

But should your convictions indicate you need to consider a mission partner, always put the mission first. Don't listen to any of your fleshly inclinations; develop a taste for someone who puts the mission first. Contemplate and pray that your moral vision will take over and you'll evaluate prospects based on their faith, not on the accidents of their fleshly endowments. You must live with that person for the rest of your life, and physical attributes tend to fade surprisingly early in the game.

Building families is hard enough in the best of times, but shepherding children through an apocalypse requires an extraordinarily strong personality, someone with faith reaching to the sky. Aspire to that kind of faith first, then consider the mission scenarios second. Reach for the bigger picture of building a covenant testimony against a very hostile world.

Fall in love with the Covenant first, then people second.

Chapter 28: Covenant Covering

It's all about the covering.

What do you have covering you? Let's open a can of worms:

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (1 Timothy 2:9-15 NASB)

In case you weren't aware of it, this was the standard ancient Hebrew outlook, nothing new or unique in any way. Indeed, it's much milder than typical Pharisaical standards, which considered women fundamentally accursed. That is, under the Talmud, no woman could ever be righteous, only tolerable. Paul opens the door to suggest that women can actively participate in the sanctity of the faith community. In the New Testament, unlike the Pharisees, men were *not* taught to chant thanks to God for not making them a woman.

Instead, the men are reminded that their wives are a precious treasure, which is very typical of the ancient Hebrew outlook. Paul balances things out a bit in another passage:

I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not

created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (1 Corinthians 11:3-15 NASB)

Paul quite intentionally uses ambiguous language so as to weave together both a literal and symbolic meaning. Aim for the big picture. A man's woman is not a mere convenience, not a slave. No one on this earth is more precious to him. She has a commission from God that demands his respect. Still, his is the mission calling, and hers is to support him – she was made for his sake. She should ennoble him, and he should act like there's no one more important to him.

But we should not imagine that Paul's prescription here for appearances is mere fashion. Again, what he describes is typical of ancient Hebrew culture, and he's encouraging it for Gentiles many centuries later and nowhere near the Levant. In the Corinthians passage he makes it clear that this is an issue rooted in our divine covering; you can hinder the power of angels to protect you by rejecting these standards. The very nature of such a warning is that you may not notice any direct consequences from disobedience, but it will come back to bite you in the long term. How much of God's divine heritage do you want claim?

So, let's restate this in our own context. Men and women both need to cover themselves with proper clothing for the sake of divine spiritual covering. It's not enough to hang a fig leaf in front of your genitals; you need something far more substantial. Let's not chase down whether it incites lust, or if it should incite lust, but that Satan is watching for gaps in your spiritual covering – and fleshly covering is a critical symbol of that. How about a moderate standard for our times? Cover shoulder to shoulder, and down to the knees. So, for example, sleeveless is okay, but showing cleavage is not. And the clothing should be rather loose, not form-fitting. We don't need it any more detailed than that; your convictions can adequately interpret the details. Besides, not everyone can be a tailor, and you sometimes must take what clothing you can get on the secular market.

Nor should you dare to assume that your personal convictions apply to everyone else claiming Christ. Any further refinement into rules for association goes too far. You learn a lot about someone's moral development by whether they push the envelope. Draw your own boundaries by your convictions, but don't turn it into a legalistic orthopraxy.

Neither men nor women should wear fancy jewelry. Culturally we still have some expectation for watches and wedding rings, but I would think even college class rings are too much. That's a bit like tooting your own horn. If we can't tell by daily evidence of intelligence that you went to college and got a degree, a class ring won't help your reputation any. I would go on to add no earrings for either gender, nor pendants (including religious ones) and bracelets. No fancy hair or hats. Women should have relatively long hair, and men relatively short hair. In mixed community worship, women should wear something on their heads to symbolize their submission to divine moral covering.

Men should remove hats in worship; this is a distinct change between Old and New Testament. It may be hard to understand, but the point is that you are not under a national covenant identity anymore. That ended with the Cross. There is something similar to this symbolism in modern military service about being "under arms" and wearing military headgear (the military jargon is "cover") while deployed under battle conditions. We who follow Christ are no longer

under arms; submission to Christ confers no national identity on the human plane. Yet, allegiance to Christ supersedes all government demands. It's two different systems; there can be no "Christian nation."

Granted, for women these days the whole issue of spiritual covering can be overly complex. In essence, if a woman is truly committed to her covenant identity, she has covering from Christ. It's between her and Christ (speaking through her convictions) whom to identify as her earthly moral covering. Without a husband, it would ideally be her father or the next nearest senior male relative. Without a believing husband, it depends on the context of the issue at hand. This latter situation will always cripple her covering; that's just the way it is. The problem can be ameliorated by choosing a valid faith elder to stand in as father figure. She must verbalize to that father figure her claim to his covering.

Consider how Acts tells us that the church in Jerusalem had Diaspora widows lacking a local, natural born eldership covering. After Christ arose, having just observed the Passover, a great many Diaspora Jews were still crowded into Jerusalem. Peter's sermon was miraculously translated by the other Apostles into many of the "home" languages of these expatriate Jews. When they came under conviction and chose to embrace Christ as their Messiah, an awful lot of them never went back to their foreign homes. They stayed in Jerusalem, and quite naturally tried to join fully this new tribal identity. It was difficult to enmesh themselves in the multi-generational household structure of the local Judean residents. The widows among the Diaspora Jews had no local connections; the locals already had a firm elder leadership structure by tradition. Thus, these "homeless widows" were brought under the care of appointed Diaspora elders (often mistakenly referred to as "deacons").

In this age when tribal identity is frankly illegal for the most part, we need all the more to concentrate on recovering the biblical structure as much as possible. Covenant men need to give strong attention to the issue of being a spiritual covering. They need to get used to thinking in feudal terms and how the boundaries can fluctuate with the context. Women need to ensure they have a nominated covering. Someone physically local is best, but even a virtual elder is better than nothing. It requires an investment of time and fellowship on whatever terms are possible; you can't just plug a name into your mental chart and then forget about it. In typical Ancient Near Eastern thinking, they would say that your covering should be able to recognize you by the stink of your armpits.

Your flesh can scarcely grasp this issue but having a moral covering system is essential to spiritual protection from Satan.

Chapter 29: Terms of Defilement

Covenant language is rich in warnings against defilement.

There are plenty of minor issues for which it's a mere matter of ceremonial or ritual defilement. The defilement doesn't change your life, but you can't go to public worship without taking a bath and waiting until the end of the day. This applies to sex with a menstrual wife, for example. Her menstrual flow doesn't defile her husband in a moral sense; it's just a matter of rituals. Unless the couple lived close to the Temple, it simply wasn't an issue either way. And frankly, sex during her menstruation can be quite beneficial for the woman, in that it can trigger hormones that reduce her discomfort.

A lot of defilement is simply a matter of sanitation in the Bible, especially in such a primitive setting as nomad tent-dwellers in the Bronze Age Near East. Circumcision itself appears to have no real spiritual effect at all but would solve significant health problems in that setting. If something is a threat of spreading disease, it still meets the biblical definition of defilement – it

represents an attack on the blessings of *shalom*. God's provision of *shalom* is limited, not absolute. There are strings attached.

So it is with the issue of avoiding defilement. The problem is defilement allows the Devil to seize portions of your divine heritage. If you do things improperly, you open the door for Satan to take away God's blessings from you. That is how such improper actions defile: They permit demonic presence. Satan and his demons are constrained by God's Law. They cannot violate the provisions and promises of any divinely revealed law code. The law codes always assume you are walking by your convictions, and the demons know what God has granted each of us. They know the differences between what God has given one versus another. They will try to deceive you about it, hoping to draw you out of your feudal domain. If you step out from under your covenant covering, you are in their territory.

Defilement is not merely an on-off switch. Covenant covering is not all or nothing. There are plenty of examples where Old Testament kings were labeled "good" despite imperfect performance in the law code of Moses. While there is an element in which the code grinds on regardless of what you know, the Lord can be merciful in exempting from wrath those who really care about peace with Him. There are no hard and fast rules about any of this.

Then again, saying that there are no hard and fast rules means that this understanding itself cannot be absolute, either. It's one thing to observe the capital offenses listed in Moses. Every one of them points to crimes that threaten stability in the covenant community. There are some actions that just cannot be wiped away and forgotten; they poison the fellowship of the community. Still, for some failures, there was a limited redemption possible if the perpetrator could gain mercy from the victim. Some capital crimes were against human victims, but sometimes it was an insult to God Himself. Thus, it's another thing to be burdened with a debt to God versus a debt to a covenant brother or sister.

So, we should know that the guilt of sin against persons is a separate matter from guilt of sin against God. Jesus said that there was at least one sin that God would not forgive. The term He used was "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:23-30). This is certainly included in what John refers to as "a sin leading to death" (1 John 5:13-17). Oh, what a vast pile of nonsense has been associated with these passages! They refer to someone who has become so hardened against the Holy Spirit in their convictions that they could credit His actions as those of demons. Oddly, you could blaspheme both the Son and the Father and still find repentance, but if you slide down to the point you can blaspheme the Holy Spirit, there's no way to climb back out of that pit.

So long as you remain in a defiled condition, you remain vulnerable to Satan's legal power before the Father. That power is commissioned for a reason. It doesn't have to make sense to us; it makes sense to God. Some actions you take cannot be undone. That was noted in previous posts. Sexual sins especially are in this category. Certain choices you make in life, while not eternal, are most definitely life-long. You cannot restore virginity. It's not a mere question of a broken hymen; the human nervous system allows for permanent imprinting. You can overlay additional imprints, but you cannot remove the imprint from your first sexual encounter. That will be with you until you die. Once those nerve pathways get used at all, they can never reset to zero.

So, even if you make peace with God and with the humans involved, you still bear the imprint. Every future sex act will be, in a certain sense, spoiled by the irremovable first experience. If you do it right the first time, you are truly blessed among humans on this earth today. A defiling first experience, made for any of the typical stupid reasons, cannot be undone. It has nothing to do with whether you were able to resist. Some moral issues are a burden on the community, and some on humanity at large, for ignoring divine revelation.

Does it make more sense now that under Moses a rapist was forced to marry his victim? He ruined her for life. There's nothing anyone can do to make it right for her, but at least he was saddled with that choice for life. And under the tribal society of the Covenant, you can bet the woman's relatives would be watching to hammer the fellow for even the slightest violation of the requirement to grant her every privilege as if she were the first wife, and he cannot divorce her. All she has to do is whine and they'll take him to court. He must live with that heavy watchful eye for the rest of her life and dare not do anything to shorten that life. It was a high inducement to be nice to her, to keep her happy, and make the most of a tragic situation.

This is an unspeakable abomination to feminists, of course. It points out that God has no tolerance for female gate-keeping on sex. Indeed, an awful lot of decisions were made for women in the Old Testament. There's no way we will ever go back to that life. Even should Christians manage to find a refuge and form a genuine covenant tribal community, it can't be on the same terms, because Moses is gone forever. What remains are the underlying principles that we can discern by reading between the lines, as clarified in the New Testament.

One of the things we learn is just how seriously God takes human sexual union. This is one of the few blessings you can have from God without spiritual birth if you do it right. But doing it right stands in stark contrast to what we see around us today in non-covenant society. This will remain one of the greatest differences between covenant people and the rest of the world. Indeed, there will be a huge difference between covenant folk and ostensibly religious church folks, too.

The issue of defilement will always be a mystery to all but a few folks who understand the language of covenants.

Chapter 30: Exercising Dominion

You must not seek close companionship outside of the Covenant.

In the Bible, there are two sexes. They are by God's decree not "equal" as modern Westerners view such things. It is flatly stated that females are morally weaker and require masculine guardianship. The business of sexual access and fulfillment is a matter of divine covering. The covering authority of any woman is who grants sexual access to her.

That doesn't mean she has no say in the matter, but the overlaying principle is that some moral guardian must keep an eye out for what blesses the covenant community. Once that access has been granted, it can scarcely be revoked, since the issue is a matter of transferring her from one covering authority to another. Indeed, in practice, within a covenant marriage, she has equal right to demand sexual satisfaction as does her man. Of course, this assumes – quite scripturally – that he's a good covenant man who can generate the kind of sexual excitement that she can't get enough of in the first place. Don't ever be foolish enough to assume that the Bible tilts everything one way or another; the covenant demands every man be accountable to God for playing the shepherd role and attracting at least some female admiration as some kind of hero.

Every man should naturally aspire to that kind of social charisma. If his natural endowment from God limits him, it is still an aspiration. Then again, the Bible says men should be prepared for celibacy. Your male sex drive is not a part of the equation; it's just something you must live with, guys. If, in the course of your earnest endeavor to please the Lord, no woman is drawn to you, and no one can match you with a female who is willing, you need to keep it in your pants. But to the degree possible with what God has given you, it is entirely normal that you should be conscious of your feudal domain and act the part.

Dodging the burden of nobility is a sin. It's even more a sin for fathers and other dominant male figures to neglect training boys to be noble. If nothing else, those men deny their progeny the

one best hope for sexual prospects, and it defrauds all the females in the community of good manly men. In this, they deny God His claim on their sons and daughters. Dereliction in the duty of ennobling your children is tantamount to offering them to Moloch.

There is no greater gift you can give your children than to invest in their development. We could talk about this for years and not exhaust the topic. But the same goes for anyone under your spiritual dominion. They are all, in a manner of speaking, your children. They are your dependents. Even in those brief moments when someone passes under your dominion as a moving target, your duty to God for them is to mentor and ennoble.

Not only is it a covenant obligation, but it should be a moral instinct to offer the best you have to raise people up to a higher moral level, if not greater faith. This is the kind of thing that should be second nature. But it requires the definition of the Word. There is a huge difference between “noble” in the Western mythology versus in the Bible. The West has multiple failures on this. We have both the image of a great hunter, a real rough and ready manly man, as well as the image of soft and civilized fellow who treats women as morally superior. Both are an abomination to God.

The biblical man is a shepherd. Anyone with ambition to lead is morally disqualified. A biblical shepherd would rather be somewhere else doing what interests him, but he gracefully accepts the moral duty to sacrifice himself for the welfare of others. And that welfare is defined as covenant obedience. There’s no showing off; there’s only courting the affection and stability of those under his care. He knows his duty and does it regardless of who is watching. He’s faithful to God first.

This is part of the background for dealing with anyone who appears to be a covenant brother or sister. What of all those people out there you’ll encounter outside the Covenant? The answer lies in the Hebrew culture. In spiritual warfare, there is family, and then there are allies, and finally bystanders and enemies. And for we who follow the Covenant, various individuals may change roles within different contexts. The question is not what they are, but what role they play at any given moment.

And depending on the circumstances, some of them may tacitly, if not explicitly, seek shelter under your dominion. Very few people will be such an abomination that you cannot let them get close to you. Those few people are merely fronting for demons. You will know them by your convictions. Most people are seeking only a temporary truce, as the hapless victims of demonic oppression in varying stages of willingness to be enslaved that way. Keep in mind that our warfare is against demonic spirits, not the people they use (Ephesians 6:10-20). Our weapons are of a moral nature granted by the Holy Spirit. How you handle the literal threats in your life is a matter of calling, conviction and context, but God is quite strong in uniformly granting His authority to His soldiers.

Thus, you are obliged to remain sensitive to your convictions in any given moment. There are plenty of demonized fools out there who can do you no real harm. You can afford to be merciful to them in some degree, the same as Jesus was to the Gadarene Demoniac. It will seldom be that dramatic, but the underlying moral strategy holds in all contexts, and it shows up when the Master dealt with the Samaritan Woman at the Well and Jewish woman caught in adultery. Keep your eye on the mission of the covenant.

Most people are simply not ready for a strong dose of holiness. Then again, the situation may not offer them much shielding from it. It’s not a question of actively seeking to draw them inside your domain, but of discerning what will glorify the Father regardless of their wishes. People are not projects. Let them come closer or move away based on their own internal dramas. Your internal stability is the key to everything. Be consistent with whom God made you and told you to be. The ones who need to read that in your character can do so.

During times of persecution, reticence is a good default.

Chapter 31: Three Things

When talking about God's Law, three major issues separate His children from those who grow up in the West: persons and property and profits.

By God's design, everything is personal. Let your mind expand on that for a moment. We've already observed that the fundamental approach of Western Civilization is to depersonalize and dehumanize everything. The Bible says we should treat everything as alive, possessing a mind and will on some level. Reality itself is alive, an expression of God's personal moral character. His Son addressed the physical world around Him as if it were living and responsive: storms, trees, etc. The Devil himself knows this, suggesting that Jesus command stones to become bread. If you don't ditch the notion of inert matter and accept that reality should be considered objective, then you cannot understand anything God has revealed.

This is fundamental to His entire divine revelation. Thus, by extension, you should realize that God does not honor the notion of contracts and depersonalized responsibilities. Such things are an abomination to Him. Corporations cannot be legal persons in His eyes, so a government with laws that accept that legal concept are poking Him in the eye. Nothing is ever impersonal. Again, nothing is impersonal in God's eyes.

So, it stands to reason that all property is personal. In order to fulfill God's Law, all property must be owned by some individual. There must be some final focal point of accountability in an individual person. The scary part for Western minds is that all persons are property in one sense or another. The secular government regards humans as mere economic assets to be handled like machinery, but God regards His people as His treasure. Yes, you are property, but whose would you wish to be?

In the biblical feudal system, the senior man is the owner of all shared resources. He has full authority to use it and dispose of it as if it were his alone, with the exception that he is accountable to God, as if that property were held in feudal care. The head of household is responsible to God for the care of the household, both property and persons. God's people are His treasure, and they are your treasure, as well. This is the domain God grants to His vassals. As in any truly feudal system, the property and accountability can be delegated to those whose roles place them under authority. Every agent and "trustee" must be an officer in the household, as it were. But by no means can anyone limit liability before God. The senior man is obliged to account for everything that happens under his hands in managing God's assets.

With God, there is very little justification for seeking high profit from any economic activity. The number one reason God brings about any prosperity is for the sake of the people. Thus, by divine justice, every business should seek to employ the maximum number of people, not cut staff for greater profits. This is part of the idea that there can be no impersonal ownership by corporations and no stocks or other forms of impersonal investment.

The only people allowed to profit justly in God's eyes are those who do the work. Loans at interest are anathema. However, no one serving God has any business in taking out loans at interest, either. The connection between the people and the money will justly be personal always. And finally, people of faith should avoid any strong connections with those outside the covenant of faith. It's one thing to buy and sell to everyone, but you cannot be unequally yoked with unbelievers. And not just nominal "Christians," but you should pull in the harness only with people who share your faith covenant.

Do business wherever the market allows, but do not become partners with sinners. Your employees are to be treated as family, and as much as possible, should be part of your covenant family of faith. There may be secular laws about whom you can employ, so do everything you can to remain a private business and avoid the kind of legal leverage that forces you to hire people

who will not embrace your moral commitments. You can also work for anyone who will hire you, but maintain your moral identity, as your witness against sin regardless of what work you do.

In God's household, there is family, the real treasure. There are servants and hired helpers, allies who can share in the daily prosperity, but have no vested interest in the household. There are also slaves and herd animals, who serve His purpose unknowingly without any profit to themselves except to survive until their usefulness ends. They all have their place. It's not a question of us possibly knowing how of He regards these people, but how He wants you to regard them. Thus, you treat everyone according to the role they play in your mission calling. This goes for economic activity, as well. Pay yourself what your conscience allows but distribute the profits according to your heart. Know who your tribe is. The sole purpose and mission of your life is to bless your covenant tribe first as a primary manifestation of seeking the Lord's glory.

None of this should be read legalistically. God knows that we don't control the secular system and never will. Rather, these should be principles in our minds organizing the wordless moral truth burning in our hearts. This is how we understand the moral failures of a world that rejects God's Law. The consequences are typically the result of what specifically the world gets wrong. These principles are how we live when we can exercise our own preferences. This should be a highly distinctive marker of believers determined to walk in the Covenant.

Everything is personal in God's eyes; it's always about the people.

Chapter 32: Not Alone

You are not alone.

Let's take a fresh look at the context: This world is fallen. It is not real, but a grand falsehood into which we have thrust ourselves by choosing to trust our human capabilities over God's revelation. That's the core of what happened in the Fall. Eden was reality, and we kicked ourselves out into a mad nightmare. The ground yields thorns and thistles instead of bread; things don't work like we expect.

It's not that Creation was changed, but it's the human awareness that has changed. We have lost the enlightenment of the Spirit, and don't understand how Creation works any more. When God came to visit Adam and Eve, they hid themselves. Nothing had actually changed, but they had gained a sense of being defiled, and it made them fearful of God. We are now under the constraints of a fallen awareness. We are born utterly incapable of seeing ultimate reality without a divine miracle to restore what we surrendered to Satan.

That great miracle is in two steps. First is the implanted promise of the Holy Spirit. We endure this life with that divine betrothal. When the time comes for the final Marriage of the Lamb, then He will implement His promise of redemption in full. In That Day, He will restore us to Eden, by completely removing all that mankind has done since the day we left the Garden.

Far, far too many people with the miracle gift have refused to use it in full. The Enemy still has them bound, so that they do not live with the full blessing available to them. If you move too far into radically trusting the Lord, they will turn on you. The most grievous wounds you will receive in this life will be from your alleged brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are numerous ways we can approach this, but let us for this moment look at the moral flaw of *instrumentality*. Take it as a theological term. It manifests most clearly when someone believes that something good in their life was made by their own hands. They did something right, they believe. Their conduct earned them the desired results. It's the same sin of Judaism in assuming that God is bound by the words of the Covenant of Moses. God is "required" to

grant certain blessings they desire simply because they can prove through semantic gymnastics that they obeyed His rules. They remain convinced that they have God over a barrel.

Think about the madness of Emperor Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30) The whole idea is that you do what God says, not merely in the words, but from the heart. You do it regardless of the outcomes because His glory is the goal. God is not an ATM. As some would say, “It’s about the process, not the product.”

How do we have anything in this life? Does it not come from the hand of the Father? Do you imagine that there is anything you could do that would have bound God’s hand to provide what you have “earned”? It need not be limited to material things. Look at the end of Saul’s reign as King of Israel, how he was so deeply dependent on human reputation that he tore the robe of the Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 15:27-29). Do you care about your social reputation, your academic or professional standing, or some other form of human regard, more than peace with God?

If you need anything for your mission in life, God will provide to those who obey their convictions. If the mission doesn’t need it, look for Him to take it away, especially if you cling too tightly to it. Don’t allow yourself to slip down into the false assumption that you need something He didn’t grant, just because human reckoning requires it. Humble yourself; embrace being a fool among men for the sake of peace with God. When organized Christian religion leans too hard on so-called professional standards, you can’t really call it “church” because it doesn’t meet the biblical definition.

This was the primary flaw of Christian leadership during Constantine’s reign. After two centuries of outright persecution, the church leadership had grown weary of the fight. They were tired of battling their own sinful nature and looked for an escape. When Constantine offered them a pagan lifeline, they seized it. From that day forward, the church became a slave of the Beast, as John foresaw in his Revelation. God’s church has been overshadowed by the Harlot since then. That’s a feature, not an anomaly; it’s our “normal” until His Return. The greatest persecution will come from the established religious institutions who are shamed by our commitment.

We need more of Elijah and Elisha, so we can stop worrying about the established religious leadership. We need people who are willing to spend time in isolation away from the sticky embrace of fallen human companionship. That we are social creatures is no excuse to socialize at the expense of holiness. But as God told Elijah, know that He always has a righteous few who do not bow the knee to idolatry. The whole point is not to concentrate them all in one place at one time to make them a target. He scatters His seed abroad to see where it will take root.

Right now, we who cling to holiness at the cost of sanity itself are the seeds He has planted, and we are scattered because there simply aren’t that many.

Epilogue: Things to Come

This book could turn into a series.

It depends on the reader response, in part, but also on how things transpire in the US. It’s not as if true believers have shed much blood for their faith just yet. However, it could come to that. The secular national government has become increasingly hostile to genuine faith in all forms and takes particular exception to obeying God’s Word.

Even without direct persecution, we shall certainly face a general tribulation of divine wrath. The answer to everything is more holiness.

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