

GOD’S KINDNESS

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PART I LEADING PEOPLE TO JESUS

"Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will men give to you. For with the measure you give, it will be given to you" (Luke 6:37-38). In this passage Jesus is stating spiritual principles.

Do you like being judged? If not, then do not judge others!

What is judgement? It is an opinion, which cuts off one person from another. Prejudice is pre-judging situations and people before we have all the facts or before we know the people.

Do you have prejudice in your life? This is what separates people from one another. Judgement and opinions divide in a negative way.

If you do what God says, your future will look good. Remember the Lord's promise in Luke 6:37-38? Judging is not what we want to do. We want mercy, grace, and kindness shown to us, not judgement. Therefore, do not judge or condemn others.

It is one thing to realize you have a problem. It is another thing to do something about it and to make the necessary changes. Many people do not realize that they do the same things, which they judge others for doing.

Just because someone appears to be different, does not mean he has to change. Maybe I am trying to change a person to be like me, to make me feel more comfortable. (It is amazing how many opinions people have about so many things).

When I judge someone else, I am showing contempt for the riches of the Lord's kindness, goodness, tolerance, and patience, which He shows to all people. Who do I think I am to want people to be like I want them to be?

In **Romans 2:4** the Word of God lists three qualities of the Lord that we need to understand for ourselves, as well as for helping us to relate to others. The first quality of the Lord is His goodness. The second quality is His tolerance. The third quality is His patience. These three qualities compose His loving kindness which

leads people to turn from their ways (repent), to seek the Lord's ways and change for blessing (God's way).

Do you have an area in your life that you need to change? Do you like to be questioned about it, and everyday told about it? Do you find that you get upset and do the opposite of what someone is trying to get you to do?

The Lord has given a principle in **I Corinthians 5**. The Christian community is not to judge the unbelievers. They are not to judge the people out in the world who do not believe in Jesus Christ. God will judge them.

If you are going to win people to the Lord Jesus, you do not judge them. It is God's loving kindness that leads people to repentance and to change. We are, however, to make note of people in the Christian community who are not doing what God says. It is the Word of God that judges people, not us.

Did you ever notice that you could not separate your judgement from what the person is doing and from the person himself? In other words, if a person is lying, that does not mean that he is a liar. It means that he is lying. There is a difference. We need to learn to separate things.

Have you ever failed before? Does that make you a failure? No. It means only that you have failed. We need to note the distinction and move ahead.

(Rom. 1:17...) "For in the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, the righteousness from God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness since what may be known about God is plain to them. Because God has made it plain to them." The Lord has made it plain to people who He is and what He is about. He is the creator.

He loves everybody. He cares about everybody. Jesus came and died on the cross so that everyone could have life with God. The Lord has set moral standards and principles of love. They are to bless people and to cause good things to happen, but there are people in the world who do not want to do what God says.

Have you ever had the thought, "I want to do it my way, I do not need anybody telling me what to do or how to do it?" That is an anti-God attitude because the Lord says that He has plans for us that are for good.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." If people do not love Him, they do not keep His commandments. So you cannot expect someone to keep His commandments when he does not love God. If people love God, they do what He says. Christians can be expected to do what He says because they say they love God.

Since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen. It is evident what the Lord has done in the creation in the earth. His eternal power and His divine nature have been displayed every time you look at the flowers in the yard, every time you look at how wonderfully God has made man. It is a mystery. The universe could not have just happened by "chance." The Lord has displayed Himself.

The qualities of God have been clearly understood by what He has made, so that men are without excuse. Everyone should recognize that there is a divine being that has created everything. There is a source of divine love that is present that will cause good things to happen to people.

The beauty of the Lord that **John 3:16** talks about is "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son (Jesus) that whoever believes on Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life." The Lord loves the people of the earth. He loves us with an everlasting love that never fades away, never changes. This is what everyone is seeking and looking for. To those that believe in Jesus, they receive that life and blessing with God now and forever.

John 3 goes on to talk about people who do not believe. They condemn themselves by not receiving God's gift of love. God has a good love plan for everybody and it is in Jesus Christ, who is God come in the flesh. God loved everybody so much that He came for us Himself and gave His life for us, and then rose from the dead for us that whoever believes on Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life. This is the good plan that God has for everyone.

There are people who never receive this. They deny it. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him (**Romans 1:21**) as God, nor gave thanks to Him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

How many graven images have you seen people make? They like these little artifacts more than they like the Creator. They like the creation more than they

like the Creator. They have exchanged the glory, putting more attention on the creation and the things of creation, including themselves, more than on the Lord, the Creator who made them.

"Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts."

That is why you see many of the perversions and the evil things going on in the earth. As man does not want the Lord, then he is going to enter into perverse things with himself.

Even their women exchanged natural relations (man/woman relationships) for unnatural ones (**Romans 1:27**). "In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

There are consequences for perverted behavior because it does not follow God's plan for good. Some did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. They thought to remove the knowledge of God and God's good plan. So the Lord gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

In other words, the Lord says, "You want to do that stuff, then you are going to do that stuff, but you are going to have the consequences of it. You do not have My blessing on your life. As a result, there is nothing good that is going to happen to you spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, financially and relationship. You are going to see the judgement of God. You have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. You are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice, you are gossips, slanders, God haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful and invent ways of doing evil. You disobey your parents; you are senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless."

People become less than what God intended for man and woman to be. God wants us to be His children: His sons and daughters with the blessing of love and life.

Although they know God's righteous decree, those that do such things deserve death. They not only continued to do these very things, but also approve of those

who practice such behavior. In fact, they encouraged people to go out and do those things that are not of God.

Romans 2:1-3 - "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself. Because you who pass judgement, do the same things. Now we know that God's judgement on those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgement on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgement?"

Do you know that the Lord sees no difference between a person with unnatural relations and a person who is in strife, envy, jealousy, deceit, or disobeys his parents. If you do one, you are doing them all.

People have a tendency to think that they are not doing as much as that person over there. Or he seems to be getting away with it, so "why can't I do it." Do you know that nobody is going to get away with anything?

Someday everybody is going to have to give an account to the Lord for better or for worse as to what he has done with his life.

The point is that the Lord wants to take judgement out of our lives. He does not want us to have judgement, and He does not want anybody else to be judged by us.

Judging has been a problem in the Christian community because the Christian community has been judging the unbelievers to the point where I have actually heard it spoken by "ministers" that these people who are doing these things all should be killed. And I'm thinking, "If thou, Lord, (**Psalm 130**) should mark iniquity, who will stand?" If you start judging others that way, then judgement will come back on you. God says, "Don't judge unbelievers." (**I Corinthians 5**) God will judge unbelievers.

Our goal is to see people come to God and to receive the life of God. You cannot buy your way into heaven. The Lord says that there is no one who does good, no, not one. What we are dealing with is that the just shall live by faith, meaning the justified are declared not guilty.

People have been declared not guilty because of what Jesus has done for them. And through faith in Jesus, they receive the blessing and the life of God.

How can I judge somebody else if I receive that blessing by mercy and by grace from God? I cannot judge somebody else on what he is doing if I have received mercy and have done the same things. People do not see themselves doing the same things.

Did you know that if you even think adultery in your mind or your heart that you have committed the act as far as Jesus is concerned (**Matthew 5**)? If you are just watching adultery, you are participating in it. Many times it will cause the act to happen because you are filling your mind with such things instead of the things of God.

Unbelievers have a depraved mind according to the Word of God. Because of what they are doing they cannot even fathom doing what is right because they only know to do wrong. We were like them at one time.

Were you a believer before you were conceived? No. Did you come out a believer? No. I have heard from people that they have always known the Lord. When I hear that, I tell the person that he is ignorant in the respect that he does not know the Word of God. The Word of God says that you are born in sin. You are conceived in sin. You are naturally separated from God because of the fall of Adam that was passed down from Adam's seed down to us today. And so we need to be born again, the Lord Jesus says. Born again in a God Spirit through faith and receiving Jesus Christ into our lives and into our hearts and then we are born again with the life of God (**John 1:12; John 3**).

Romans 2:1 - "Who pass judgement on someone else for whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things. Now we know that God's judgement against those who do such things is based on truth, so when you, a mere man, pass judgement on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgement?"

Do you want God's judgement?" No way! If thou, Lord, shall mark iniquity, who shall stand? In other words, if God were going to start finding fault, everybody would be lost. There would be nobody that would stand before Him someday.

Romans 2:4 - "Or do you show contempt for the riches of His goodness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you towards repentance?" What brought us to God is the fact that we need some good news. We need a break. We need some hope. We need some life and we have come to the point that we have found that in our lives, there was emptiness.

You can go after all the money in the world. You can have all the money in the world and you can have all the education in the world and find out that you do not know everything. It is an amazing thing.

You could have emptiness in your heart. You can think, "If I get together with that person I will have fulfillment in my life." And you get together with that person and there is not fulfillment in your life because only God can fill that spot. You can get all of the houses, all the cars, all the things that this world has to offer and find that there is still something empty and missing in your life.

That is because you were created with that spot that belongs to God and only the Lord can fill that place. God has a plan for us, His loving kindness, His goodness, the riches of His goodness. When we judge somebody else who does not know the Lord, we are showing contempt for God's goodness that reached into our lives and gave us a chance.

Did you ever need a second chance? That is why Jesus says you must be born again. You must get another start. Nicodemus in **John 3** says, "How can I go back into my mother's womb?" That is thinking naturally. Think spiritually. Jesus was not saying go back into your mother's womb. He was saying be born of God. Be born again.

How does that happen? Through accepting the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God into your life and believing that God loves you and has a good plan for your life. Accept God's plan and give up the old self-centered plan. Saying, "Lord, I turn from the old ways. Jesus Christ you are my Lord and I believe you are risen from the dead."

Did you know you used to have a deprived and depraved mind -selfish, or self-centered? That is deprived and depraved, because we were created to have the mind of Christ, the mind of God which allows us to be a blessing to everybody else and to give and to share and to care. The Lord created us to love and to be loved, to forgive and to be forgiven, not to judge and be judged. Because of Jesus we have an abundant good life full of blessing.

Romans 2:5 says, "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgement will be revealed." God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those, who by persistence in doing good, seek glory, honor and immortality He will give eternal life, but to those who are self-seeking, who reject the truth of God and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will

be trouble and distress for every human being that does evil first for the Jew then the Gentile, but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good. For God does not show favoritism.

Ephesians 2:1 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” We were dead in our transgressions and sins. Unbelievers are dead in their transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the earth. (Speaking about the devil).

You either serve God or you serve the devil. You cannot serve both. The spirit is now at work in those who are disobedient. People who are disobedient to God’s commandments have the spirit of Satan working in their lives. They are being influenced by the devil.

Now God tells us, “Do not judge them, show them God’s goodness.” And that will lead them to want to change and to know that there is something better than what they are experiencing right now. The Lord says, “I love you. I care for you. I want you to come into My good plan that I have for your life.”

“All of us who also lived among them at one time, gratifying the craving of our sinful nature and following its desire and thoughts.” "Like the rest, we were by nature, objects of wrath, but because of His great love for us (**Ephesians 2:4**) God who was rich in mercy has saved us."

That is how God is, that is His goodness. He wants to give everybody an opportunity to be saved. He does not want anybody lost. He does not want anybody to perish. He wants everybody to have the good things of God. He made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace, God’s ability, you have been saved.

Eph. 2:6 "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace." He has this plan: He wants to bless everybody. He wants to do things beyond our expectations or imaginations; expressing His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith. This is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast (**Ephesians 2:8,9**).

People say, "I’m doing what is right. I boast in that. You are doing what is wrong. You are judged. You are condemned.” That is not God’s way. God’s way is mercy. Mercy leads a person to change. It leads a person to want to change. You

have to want to change before you can change. But it is God's goodness and mercy that enables us to want to and to change. God's kindness and mercy is undeserved.

God will change you when you ask for His help. Do you need help with judging people? God can help you to stop judging people. The Pharisees had the problem with self-righteousness. Do you remember when Jesus was talking about one man who said, "I go to church every week. I give my tithes. I give my offerings. I help the poor. And I thank you Lord that I am not like that guy over there."

What was that guy over there doing? He was down on His face before God saying, "Lord forgive me, I am a sinner. I have nothing going on in my life, forgive me." And Jesus asked which one of these two guys went away blessed? The one, who said, "I need God. I need help."

Self-righteousness does not allow you to be wrong. It does not allow you to see the truth either. It blinds you from the truth of who you really are and what is really going on. But Jesus says to whom much has been forgiven the same loves much. When a person realizes how much God has forgiven us, then that person is able to start to realize that God loves him and He did this for him, not because he earned it or deserved it or was worthy of it, but because He loves him and He wants him to be with Him forever. If God was to mark iniquity who would stand.

James 1 talks about the Lord. "If any lack wisdom, let him ask God and He will generously give it and not find fault." He does not find fault with you through Jesus. If you take Jesus out of the equation, then you are a poor miserable sinner headed for the fire. In Jesus, the Lord has forgiven you. He loves you. He loves you with an everlasting love that does not fade away or change, whether you are good or bad.

People have been told that they are "good" boys or girls when they do good things and "bad" boys or girls when they do the bad things. There are many boys and girls that God wants to be good boys and girls, but it is not going to happen based on their works. It is going to be based on the fact that somebody loves them, cares about them and leads them to a better way. They can find out that the Lord is there to help them.

A lady came to me one time and said, Pastor, what is the sense of doing right and doing good? I am destined to go to hell!" I looked at her and said, "That is not how the Bible reads. Where did you get that?" She said, "I just figure that some are saved and destined to life with God and some are destined to go to hell."

God's desire is that no one perish and that all come to the saving knowledge of the truth. It says that God shows no favoritism. He gives everybody opportunity to receive His love. You can accept His love. He also knows who is and who is not going to. He gives everybody an opportunity to receive the life of God in Jesus Christ - Equal opportunity.

The Lord is giving equal opportunity to all people of all races, all economic backgrounds, all societies, and all cultures. He is giving everyone equal opportunity to be loved by the Lord.

Jesus said, "Come to me, I love you, I want you to have this good plan that I have for your life. Accept My love, receive My love."

That is what God did when He came in Jesus Christ. He lived for us. He went around anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (**Acts 10:38**) doing good and destroying the work of the devil for God was with Him. God had a good plan for His life. He wants us to be saved and not be separated from God. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**).

If somebody was always finding fault with you, you did not know that God loved you. Unfortunately, with many parents everything the children do is negative, negative, negative, negative! You go to the work place, and all they ever tell you is what you are doing wrong. They do not tell you what you are doing right. The point is whether you are doing right or doing wrong, before God you cannot do anything that is right apart from His love. His love for you makes you right.

If you break one of the commandments, you have broken them all as far as God is concerned. And that is why keeping the moral law could save no one. In fact, no one had the ability to keep the moral law because they did not have God in him or her. That is why He says, "You have to be born again, receive Jesus and the Spirit and Life of God."

Then you have the ability to do what is right. Before that, you did not care. You just did what you wanted to do and you did not care about anybody or anything except yourself. Basically you only cared about others as long as you could use them for your purpose and your plan.

The Lord says, "I have shown you mercy." He is saying, "I do not care what you have done or have not done, you come to me and I will receive you in Jesus. You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You come to me and I will

give you life.” To whom much has been forgiven, the same loves much. When we realize how much we have been forgiven, then we are thankful and love much, not judging others.

That is why it is easier to see someone out there that is doing more things that are wrong. Then you can judge them. But the Lord says, “Do not even judge an unbeliever.” Do not even open your mouth to speak against those people. The Lord says that He will judge them.

He says that our part as God’s people is to do what Jesus did towards all of us. "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." "Father, forgive me, I do not know what I am doing. Forgive us, we do not know what we are doing. And give us life, Lord. Help us to make the changes."

When the church gets rid of that spirit of judgement, then we are going to see all kinds of people coming to the Lord. Because God’s people are not forgetting from whence they came. Often people get a little faith message and all of a sudden they are looking down at somebody else saying, “Where is your faith, brother?” They forget that yesterday they were crying and bawling about how rough life was and how hard it was and all the things they were going through. They forgot about that because now they have somebody else they could work over.

You have either been in their shoes, or you are going to be in their shoes. What you do to others, is how you want to be treated. How do you want to be judged? If you are going to judge, go all out. Let everyone know what you are doing, and receive the consequences of it. Do not cry when you get back what you gave out.

There is a better way. It is called mercy, God's kindness. That is what Jesus was trying to teach the church in His day, to understand and learn about mercy. We need to understand that if it were not for God’s mercy and love, no one would have a chance. So we want to be heavy on the mercy side. It says in **2 Chronicles 5:13** when they were talking about God’s love and His goodness and His mercy endure forever, the glory of the Lord came down on the place. They were acknowledging the goodness of God.

The goodness of God overlooks the injustice of man and the things that man does. It changes the heart. You can send somebody to prison for a crime, but that will not change him. It is just consequences for the crime. There has to be a change of the heart for the person to live a different style.

If God has changed your life and you are starting to live a different style, praise God! Praise God because it is God working in you. He has begun a good work in you. He is faithful to perfect a good work in your life and He is doing it.

(Philippians 1:6).

Understand that the Lord wants to do a good work in other people as well as you. They may not be doing the things of God. They may be doing awful, hideous kinds of things. (Maybe you used to be involved in similar things.) But now you are not involved in those things because God has moved you. You have come out of that place. Now believe God for those people.

God calls things (**Romans 4:17**) that be not as though they are. The result is they become, they happen! You start seeing that person as the best believer that you know. He might have the most vile, filthy mouth, but you start believing God that he is speaking forth the Word of God with the same ferociousness and vitality that he is speaking out that other stuff. You believe God for that and watch what is going to happen. Why? Because you have the grace and the mercy and the ability of God working in you to show loving kindness to that person. You can show God's goodness to that person through your life.

Do good to people, and watch what the Lord will do. Good does not come out of judgement. Jesus said to the lady caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." **John 3** says that people condemn themselves by not believing and receiving God. She believed. She was worthy of death. She was caught in the act of adultery.

In her society if somebody was doing that, they took them outside of the city and threw rocks at them and they killed them. That was the end of it. She knew she was worthy of death at that point. But, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." He was not saying that what she was doing was okay. He was saying, "No, the goodness of God has come into your life, the life of God has come into your life, now turn from it and God has a good way for you" (**John 8:1-11**).

It could be that when Jesus was at the table of some people's house, that the same lady came in with the oil worth a year's wages and anointed Him in preparation for His burial. The people were judging Him about receiving this. They were judging her by what she was doing and saying.

"If He was a man of God, then He would know who this was and who is doing this." But Jesus looked at them and said "When I came into your house, you did not do all these nice things for Me to prepare for an honored guest. You did not do

anything for Me, but this lady came in off the street and anointed me with this oil worth a years wages."

The self-righteous people were saying the oil should have gone to the poor. The servant is worthy of the honor that goes to the Lord for what He did. She is thanking God by thanking the man of God in her life. As she did that, the blessing of God was on her and Jesus said, "This event will be remembered until the day I return, what this woman has done out of thankfulness to God and thankfulness to Me."

And it came because Jesus did not condemn her. He did not condone what she was doing. He said, "Go and sin no more!" In other words, the power of God is on your life. The mercy of God has come into your life today. The judgement of God has lifted off your life and the mercy of God has come. God has declared you not guilty because of the blood of Jesus. And she knew she was forgiven. And Jesus said to the other ones, "To whom much has been forgiven, the same loves much."

When you realize how much the goodness of God is on your behalf, you just fall on your face and say, "Lord, forgive me for being stubborn. Forgive me for being rebellious. Forgive me for trying to do things my own way. Forgive me, Lord, for wanting my will to be done on earth, rather than Your will done on earth."

Then you go out with a whole different attitude towards people. You start to see them with a heart of love. You start to see them with a heart of thanksgiving. You start to see them with a heart of kindness. You start to see them with a heart of mercy. You start to see them with a heart of goodness that says, "I want to see God's best in your life."

God's best does not come through judgment. At the end, when the Lord judges everything, the Lord does not want to judge in wrath. He wants to judge in mercy. But the people who have not believed and received the love of God, the people who have turned away from God's reaching out in kindness and goodness to them will condemn themselves. They will be judged at that point and separated forever from the goodness of God. This judgement will not be based on the Lord's choice, but upon the people's choice for death rather than God's life.

What we need to understand is that even while we were enemies of God, Jesus Christ died for us on the cross. He gave His blood so that we could have forgiveness and life. God loved us even when we did not love Him. And He gave Himself for us.

People need to know the goodness of God. When you have received that goodness and you are so thankful, then you look at people and say, “Yes, what they are doing in their lives is not right, it is not causing a blessing in their lives. It is not going to help them.” You have to get across to them that God loves them.

The part in the Bible that used to bother me was in **Matthew 5** where it says, “Love your enemies, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven who causes the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust.” I would say, “Why Lord, do you let good things come on the unjust?”

He started to show me that everyone was unjust. The only reason we are just now is because of faith in Jesus Christ, meaning we receive God’s goodness on our behalf. That is what made us just. It was not obeying this or doing this or not doing that.

When we do not do those things that we should do, we are cutting ourselves off from the blessing. God never intends us to do anything that He does not intend to bless us with it. “Honor your father and your mother that it may be well with you and you will live long on the face of the earth, etc.”

What we see in **Romans 1** is that people were disobedient to their parents. There is no blessing in that. (We are not talking salvation here. We are talking life with God.) I will be judged some day as a believer on the basis of what I have done whether good or evil according to the commandments of God (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). (I am saved, but I am talking about rewards.) There are rewards in tithes and offerings. There are rewards in keeping the Sabbath Day holy. There are rewards in honoring your father and your mother. There are rewards in doing good and loving people and being obedient to the Spirit of God. There are rewards that are going to come from the Lord today and someday. He is going to pass out rewards.

You do not just want to get into the new heaven and earth. You want to be rewarded when you get there. You want the Father to say to you, “Well done, good and faithful son! Enter into My pleasure that I have prepared for you. Enter into My blessing.”

It is not enough just to get in. You should want to be blessed and receive the rewards. Why? It brings our Father pleasure every time you do what He wants. It is my little way of saying, “Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you,

Lord, for saving my life. Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me and giving me a new life and a new beginning.”

Every time I do my Father’s Word, that is my way of saying, “I love you, Lord.” That is why I love coming to church, because I love the Lord. I love giving tithes and offerings because I love the Lord. I love being with God’s people. I love the Lord. And I love talking to people about the good plan of God because I love the Lord, and I love them.

I wish I did it right, all the time. You always have somebody around helping you, showing you that you did not do it right. But it is another thing when you keep being pushed down about what you are doing. Sometimes people think that they are the Holy Ghost.

It is not my job to judge you. It is not your job to judge me. That is the Lord’s work, and His Word is judging me. You judge yourself. Paul says that he does not care about people’s judgement. He does not care about his own judgement about himself. Some day he is going to stand before the Lord and the Lord is going to sort out things for what they really are, right or wrong, and reward based on that. Faith can not rise up in a person’s heart when he is being judged and condemned all the time

(I Corinthians 4:1-5, Romans 8:1).

PART TWO GOD'S TOLERANCE

This book is about how God draws people to Himself. There are character principles of God that enable the Lord's good plan to come into people's lives. As the Lord is drawing people to Himself who do not know Him and do not know His love, these principles are what make these things happen so that they want the things of God. These are also the same principles that work in people who have loved the Lord, but have drifted off and gotten distracted by the world and the things of life, the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, lust of other things and just kind of ran dry. Sometimes you can even get so busy about the things of the Lord that you just get weary in well doing. You are doing well, but you just get tired.

Have you ever gotten tired in well doing? It happens. The Lord has some things that He says to us to encourage us. The Lord is an encouraging God because He loves us and He does not find fault with us.

The Lord does not want us judging anybody about anything. That is His place. Our place is to encourage people. If the Lord were to mark iniquity (**Psalm 130**) who will stand? There is no one that could stand, no one would have a chance. God has forgiveness for us, He has mercy for us and He loves us and wants to give us another chance.

Have you ever failed and needed another chance? The Lord does not come along and knock you upside the head and tell you that you failed, that is it, strike three you are out. In His love and His mercy He wants His full plan to come to pass in our lives and He knows our weaknesses and our frailties.

He knows that He needs to make us aware of the fact that He loves us so much that at anytime and in any place we can come to Him with full confidence and assurance of faith sit upon His lap and say, "Dad, I need some help." And He will say, "Child, I love you and I am here for you. I will never turn you away and I will never cut you off." When you know that, then you will come to the Lord because you know He loves you and He cares about you.

Romans 2:4: "Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience not realizing that God's kindness leads you towards repentance?" It leads you to change and enables you to change.

There are three qualities of God that are listed below that are the key to allowing people to come and receive the good things of God. As you are out there about

God's business you want to be that shining light to the Lord. These three qualities need to be developed in your life:

1. To know God's goodness. You have to know God's goodness before you can share God's goodness.
2. Tolerance. Forbearance and Tolerance. This is something I have never heard anybody talk about very much, but if there is anything that is going to draw people to God, it is the quality of God's tolerance/forbearance.
3. His loving kindness rooted in patience.

The definition of forbearance is "to refrain from, avoid or cease doing or saying." In other words, you hold your tongue and you do not do anything when somebody is saying something. "To Endure, to tolerate, to keep ones self in check." Note, there is a measure of self-control involved. "Control under provocation." Somebody in your face and you do not react. (God never reacts. He always responds.) "Patient restraint. The act by which a creditor extends times for payment of a debt or forgoes for a time his right to enforce legal action on the debt."

One definition of tolerance is "tolerating views, beliefs, practices of others that differ from one's own views, beliefs and practices." People have the right to believe whatever they are going to believe and there is a respect of other's beliefs. "Freedom from bigotry or prejudice."

Jesus says judge righteous judgement, not by the appearance of things. Get the truth, get the facts. The facts may not necessarily be the truth. We need to take it to another dimension. We need to take it to the spiritual realm to see what God's truth is about the circumstance or situation. The circumstance may not be the way God sees it.

Romans 4:17: "God calls things that be not as though they were. And what is the result? They become. That is faith (**Hebrews 11:1**).

Another definition of tolerance is "the amount of variation allowed from a standard or accuracy. To bear, sustain, to not interfere with, to allow, to permit, to recognize and respect others beliefs or practices without yourself sharing them."

In other words, you can respect what they believe even though you do not agree with it. They have a right to believe whatever they are going to believe.

Today, the Lord says, "I set before you blessing and cursing, life and death, choose life" (**Deuteronomy 30:19**) Did you know that the Lord does not agree with the death stuff. Nor does He want anyone to have it. But He respects the people's right to choose what they are going to have. In Jesus, we have been given the opportunity to be able to choose life.

A third definition of tolerance is "to bear or put up with someone or something not especially liked. To hold one-self up against, to put up with, bear with, endure, suffer."

Tolerance is something that you have to work. Everyday God is working tolerance with His people. His people are all people, believer and unbeliever alike. Unbelievers do not know that they are going to be believers. The plan is that they be saved and have life, but time is a factor. The Lord is making all things beautiful in its time (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**).

The Lord's heart is to save, that is why Jesus came. In **John 3** it says that He did not come to condemn the world, He came to save the world. For people to come to the Lord, they need to see the goodness, tolerance, and the patience of God that allows them to have the time to come into the things of God and to receive His love.

Did you know that if God were to mark iniquity, you never would have come out of your mother's womb? If you were going to be judged, the moment you were conceived, you would die because "in sin you were conceived" (**Psalms 51:5**).

What is sin? A condition of separation from God, missing the mark, falling short, violating God's commandments. We thank God for His loving tolerance and goodness and patience that allowed you to be able to hear and receive the good news about God's loving plan and to come into that plan and accept it.

Receive the goodness of God. Receive the love of God. Receive the blessing of God. Receive the forgiveness of God. Receive the life of God. Receive the holiness of God. Receive the word of God. Receive Jesus!

The "gospel" means "good news." Everybody wants good news. Everybody wants the love of God. There is not anyone that does not want to be loved and cared for. The good news of God includes divine life, divine health, divine provision, divine protection, divine blessing, divine favor and goodness. There is not anyone that does not want such things. That is what volumes of books are written about. Jesus

says that the thief came to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that you might have life, real life, abundant life (**John 10:10**).

You can receive the salvation of God, but not have the abundant life that God has given because that is an active choice where you are participating in the things that God has. In other words, obey. You will find that there are people all over the earth that choose not to obey. We are not to judge the world, the Lord will judge the world. That is where the Christian community has really missed it. And then they wonder why people do not come to the love of God. It is because they have been judging them.

If God were to judge us, none of us would have come to Him. But He did not find fault, because of Jesus. Jesus took all of our separation from God on Himself. He took all of our faults, our weaknesses, all of our shortcomings, all of our lack of faith in Himself, and He gave us right standing with God. Jesus made you a believer. Quit struggling about your faith. Look to the author and the finisher of your faith (**Hebrews 12:3**).

When Peter denied Jesus three times and Jesus came to him later, He asked him three questions. "Do you love me, Peter?" Then He tells him go feed His lambs and sheep. He did not bring up anything about Peter denying Him three times. He did not say, "What is your problem? Where is your head? What is going on?" He did not even discuss it. Why not? Because it was not important. What was important was where he was going. Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, get up, and let's go.

Many people have been so raised in an environment of negativity, beat up, judged, and held down that faith cannot rise when they are condemned and belittled.

James I says, "If any lacks wisdom let him ask God and He will give it. He will not hold back anything. He is going to give generously and without finding fault." He is not going to say, "Why don't you know this by now? Haven't you got this? What is your problem?"

We want to be attractive, for people to come to the Lord. Good news is attractive. Sometimes, what is not attractive is the people who bring the good news.

Many years ago I had a book that meant much to me. On its cover was a little cartoon where one guy had the other guy down on the ground and had his Bible in his hand beating him with his Bible. The subtitle of the book is "How Not to be a Witless Witness."

What happens is that people rebel from that style. They go the opposite way. Nobody is going to rebel from God's goodness because these are good things coming their way. Everyday mercy, fresh and new, is ours. Yesterday is over it is history. Today is brand new. Good things are coming your way.

The Lord is tolerant with us. When you look at those definitions, understand that is how the Lord is towards you. Do you have any personality quirks? Do you find that you have some areas of faith and others where you do not believe? You are growing. You might have faith for finances, but not have faith for health. You might have faith for health, but you do not have faith for relationships. There are different realms of faith and we vacillate in and out of those things, depending on how we feel.

The Lord is tolerant with you. He does not strike you down the first time you backslide. Have you ever thought, "Today I do not feel like going to church?" The Lord does not strike you down, but He will put the thought in your heart, "It is good for you to go to church. There is something there for you today. We have an appointment with each other and the Lord."

If I go to church, I have an appointment with the Lord. I have an appointment with everyone at church. One of the finest things you can have is relationship with the Lord and with each other. The Lord loves it when we all come together. He loves to do wonderful things. In His presence are His presents. He loves to give out presents to His children.

Ephesians 4:2 tells us "forbear each other in love." Note that God's love is the entire reason behind God's goodness, tolerance, and patience. He loves the people. He loves everybody without exception. Not just the ones who do things that are good and nice.

The verse in **Matthew 7** always used to bother me, where the Lord caused the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. I said, "I can understand raining on the just, but on the unjust?" The Lord says, "Love your enemies, pray for them that despiteful use you and persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who causes the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust."

Why does He cause the rain to fall on the unjust? If God had not rained on you, you would not ever be just. So, we thank God that He shows that same mercy on the unjust because we used to be unjust. And now, God has made us just through what Jesus has done for us.

If He had not put that rain of His Spirit upon you and given you that opportunity to receive His goodness, you would not be just. But sometimes once you get just, you forget that you used to be unjust. Do not ever forget from whence you came. However, you are not there anymore, and that is the point of thanksgiving. You used to be there, but you are not there anymore - because of His goodness, His tolerance, and His patience.

Colossians 3:13: "Forebear one another, forgive one another."

I Corinthians 13:8: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never fails." The love of God never fails, and the love of God is coming to you, even as you speak right now in Jesus' name. And the power of the living God is coming to you that you might know that love of God.

He does not condemn you. He does not judge you. He just says, "I have died for you. I have given Myself for you because I love you and I want to touch you right now in Jesus' name with the love of God." Just open your heart and receive: "the Lord loves me in Jesus' name. The Lord touches me right now in Jesus' name." You are free. Say, "Jesus Christ, You are my Lord. Thank you for loving me and making me your child."

The three qualities of God that cause people to come to Him are God's goodness, tolerance, and patience.

When you receive the goodness of God and the mercy of God, then you will be able to demonstrate that to other people. Our demonstration of God's goodness, tolerance and patience is in relation to each other.

Do you remember that the only time that the disciples asked for more faith was when Jesus was talking about forgiving the brothers?

Colossians 3:13: "To forgive one another," and that comes right after forbearing one another. And again, what is our definition of tolerance. "Tolerating views, beliefs, practices of others that differ from one's own, to bear up or put up with someone or something not especially liked."

If people are ever going to accept anything that the Lord has to say through you, you are going to have to learn to respect them. You need to respect and honor people as a person who is a creation of the Lord. They may not even realize that God created them. They may not even know from whence they came. They may

not know or care anything about the Lord, but when they see you displaying goodness towards them, respect towards them, honor towards them and love towards them, from which all those others have come, then that is going to make a difference in that person's life.

When they do not see you condemning them, judging them, belittling them, then they will open their heart to God. Many people say "Lord, save Henry" and then they start talking about Henry. "He'll never turn around. Look at how he acts." Then they talk to Henry down their nose "You are a filthy sinner, Henry. Look at how you smoke, drink, carouse. Look at your actions. Look at what you do. Look at how you talk out of both sides of your mouth and you don't even smell good."

They do not even need to say that. Sometimes they just avoid Henry and they leave Henry over there by the side rather than including Henry and caring for Henry and making him feel a part of something. Judging takes on many forms.

With children, whatever they think comes right out, but when you become an adult you become more sophisticated in covering your feelings and expressing yourself. So you cannot just come out and say, "Henry you are a jerk." You just do not have anything to do with him. Just forget Henry, we will not include him. If he is around, we will just go about our business.

I had an evangelist ask me what I had learned about caring for God's people over the past 33 years. I said, "The first thing is to stay with people." With God nothing is impossible! Do not give up the faith in God's ability to change people and the fact that they can and will change God's way. They may or may not want to have anything to do with you, but you do not give up believing for God's best for them.

I Corinthians 13:8: "Love bears all things, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things, it never fails." That means that people can change, and it is God's loving kindness that leads people to change.

Have you found that God has loved you and you have changed, and you are changing? It is happening! You are changing into the image of Jesus. Have you found that you think about the Lord more than you used to think about the Lord. Have you found that you think less about yourself? Have you found that you are thinking more about others? That is a miracle! Just like raising people from the dead, the Lord is making people not to be selfish and self-centered.

If you show mercy, you receive mercy. Mercy is not an excuse. It is important. But when it is needed, thank God for it. Jesus is working in you.

If we are going to reach people who do not know the Lord or have different belief systems than we have, we are going to need to treat them with that same respect and honor and love that the Lord has shown to us. I do not care what belief system people have. People who watch our program believe in all kinds of different things. But they are watching because they know there is truth that the Lord has for their lives. There is something that God has for their lives. That is why they are watching.

The Lord will heal your body, heal you mind, heal your family, save your soul, and forever you will end up with God. No more sorrow, no more pain, no more suffering, no more sickness, no more death, no more fear, anxiety, confusion or commotion. (When we have received that good news in the mercy of God, love bears all things.) That is tolerance.

Romans 2:1 "When you judge others for the same things you do, you judge yourself."

People make problems in life because they start picking and poking, finding fault. (Have you ever watched chickens, always picking and poking?) If something does not come up, they remember something that came up. (Love does not keep a record of wrongs.) The Lord does not do that. You can start to change and grow. You can tell somebody once about something and make him or her aware of it. But telling them twice is nagging. If an unbeliever comes along and does not know the goodness of God, and you are always finding fault with them saying, "You need to change this in your life, and you need to change that in your life," who needs or wants that?

They are not able to change, and neither were you when you were trying to make the changes happen. Have you tried to make the changes, and it did not happen? It did not work because you were trying to make the changes. It was good that you wanted to change, but you did not have the power. But now, you have the power through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is working and showing you mercy and the ability to obtain grace, the ability of God to make that change.

God calls things that be not as though they are and things start to happen. I told a wife to call her husband the kindest and most loving person, and to thank God for that man for being the best gift from God in her life. When she did, he looked at her and ran out of the room. Now he has become just that. Something happened.

It happens within the heart of the person who is exercising tolerance. It is the heart of love. It is the heart that does not give up on anybody. It is the heart that does not hold records of wrongs. It is the heart that wants God's best and is willing to suffer, to bear with, to tolerate, and to suffer inconvenience for the sake of seeing the change happen. **Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, it never fails.**

It is easy to find things wrong with people. That your attitude is not one of tolerance, goodness and patience. It is "change now, or get out of my life." Most people operate their lives on what is convenient for them. It is not a problem until it comes into their space. Did you have as many problems when you were single as you did when you were married? Did you find out how selfish you really were when you got married? You did not realize how selfish you were when you were single. But when you got married you received somebody else in your life. All of a sudden you become a selfish ogre.

Exercise goodness, tolerance and patience. Why? Because you know in God's good time, He will make all things beautiful. You need to have that confidence in your heart that God is making the changes. That the Lord is making things the way He wants them to be. Do not try to make people into your image. You are not God!

Do you remember the man in **Matthew 18** who was forgiven a great debt, a debt he would never have been able to pay, millions and millions of dollars, and the king whom he owed it to forgave the debt? The king first gave him time to come up with it. The man was not able to, and the king forgave him. Then that man turned around and went right to someone who owed him a nickel. He ran over to him and said, "Pay up."

If God has your best interest at heart and He has been good to you, then you should be good to others. God's good things are happening, so you should learn to put up with some nonsense. Just think about what the Lord sees and hears you do every day, but He does not even bother with it.

When you are flipping up those selfish prayers and those selfish requests, and you are doing all these selfish things, the Lord is not even looking at that stuff. I do not believe the Lord answers "no" to prayers. I believe He just ignores those stupid selfish prayers. But when you speak a prayer of faith in the will of God, He says, "It is done, son. It is done, daughter." Learn to be big like God.

Grow up and you start to become tolerant. Realize that you cannot expect a five-year-old to act like a 15-year-old. Do not put demands and expectations on people. The Lord does not put any demands or expectations on you. (Because you would fail.) He only asks you to do the things that you are able to do.

He says in **Philippians 2:12-13**: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? He gave you the salvation, now work it out. And He is patient with us in that process. Everyday you are making choices for better or for worse. You are growing. You are learning. You have not arrived yet, but you are pressing ahead to the mark of the high calling of God, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Your Lord does not kick you when you are down. I do not want to kick you when you are down, nor do I want you to kick me when I am down (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**).

That has always bothered me. I tell people, a minister that is worth his salt has his first concern for the people of God, not for prestige, honor, to stand behind a pulpit, or to speak out things. You do not have anything to say if you do not have the heart for the people that God has. (You do not have the love for the people.) You have no business sharing anything with them. I am talking to anybody who calls himself a believer. You have nothing to share with anybody if you do not have that heart for the people that will bear with them during the good times or hard times.

I thank God for help and encouragement, but I do not need to be pressed down. I do not need to be negatively spoken of and neither do you. That does not make you attractive and it never helps you to get anything that you were ever looking for.

If you want love, love somebody. If you want mercy, show mercy to somebody. If you want honor, be humble, become a servant. Do good to people and people will love you and care for you. They will receive what you have to say and you have good news to share.

"If thou, Lord, should mark iniquity, who shall stand?" Before the forgiveness was the forbearance and not finding fault. If you do not receive a wrong that somebody does to you, then that wrong has no effect on you in Jesus name. Do not receive that wrong for the word that was sent or that action that was done. Why? It is not good. It is not beautiful. It is not something that our Father has sent to you.

Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they have done." The same people that Jesus did all those wonderful things for were saying, "Crucify,

crucify Him." All of His disciples ran to save their lives. And Jesus had this joy in His heart because He knew He was in the will of His Father and He was in the place of love to the people. He did not let the rejection ruin his life or attitude. His trust was in the Lord.

Like faith, hope and love, there remains God's goodness, tolerance and patience. Knowing that God is not finished yet, that He is still working in me and in you. You have to know it first in you and when you know it first in you, then you will be able to show it. The Lord has all of that and now He is imparting it to us as His people. This takes work. Just always remember that the Lord loves that person out there just as much as He loves you. He wants to do good things for them, just as much as He wants to do good things for you. You need to let that happen. He is going to love them through you!

PART THREE TOLERANCE CONTINUES

What is it that turns people's hearts to the Lord? We find in **Romans 2:4** that it is the qualities of His goodness, His kindness, His tolerance, and His patience.

We are looking at how to develop those qualities in our lives. If these are qualities of the Lord, then where is the Lord now in our lives? He is in us. These are the qualities of God that would make us effective in leading people to the love of God, helping them come to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and enabling people to walk in love for God and in the blessing of the Lord.

We have considered goodness and kindness. Now we will consider tolerance.

I have never heard a lesson on tolerance, but I have seen many lessons on intolerance. People oftentimes are rigid. They have beliefs, thoughts, and judgement everyday of their lives. They make judgements about everything and everybody, about our situations and circumstances, about people walking down the street, the cars other people are driving, how people are driving. They are making judgements and talking about things.

They are observing and "imputing" constantly. (Our minds are working so fast we cannot even believe how fast they are working). The judgements we are making affect our perception of situations. They affect how we feel about a person.

The Lord Jesus has provided salvation for everybody, but not everybody has abundant life. You can have eternal life, but not have abundant life. Many of God's people have received salvation in Jesus and have not actually entered into the abundant life that God has provided because of attitudes.

Attitudes affect judgement and perception in situations. You may have the same experience others are having. They think that the experience was incredibly wonderful, and you think it was the worst thing that ever happened to you. Why? - Different perceptions, different attitudes, (going through different filters about the same event.)

Have you ever looked in the mirror and felt good, and looked in the mirror another day and felt crummy? You did not change. What changed? Your attitude, your outlook towards things changed. Attitude is what helps us to enter into the abundant life and to allow others to enter into that abundant life. If I have a bad attitude, it is going to drive somebody away from what God has for him. We have to master this.

The Lord told Cain in **Genesis 4** that sin was camped at his door and he was going to have to master it. What was his problem? He had jealousy towards his brother. He was blaming God for not blessing his offering. But the Lord said, "Why are you angry Cain? If you do what is right, you will be blessed."

What was the problem? It was his attitude that caused him to disobey and not do what God wanted. He had an attitude. He got upset at his brother because he thought that his brother was being shown partiality, but God does not show partiality. He gives everybody equal opportunity to have equal blessings.

Some people have more than others because of their attitudes. They gratefully, thankfully, receive God, believe God, and do what God says to do. Those people are naturally going to be more blessed of God than the people who willfully, knowingly, do the opposite of what God wants. The Lord said, "Why are you so angry? If you do what is right, you would be blessed, Cain."

Then Cain did not listen to God. He went right out and killed his brother. Then he blamed God for what he did. (That is life.) The Lord loves everybody and He has a good plan for everybody's life. But people have the opportunity to choose blessing or cursing (**Deuteronomy 30:19**).

We can set an environment for people to receive the love of God. That is what the Lord has done with His goodness. He has displayed that He does not show partiality to anybody. He wants everybody saved. He wants everybody blessed. He wants everybody healed, delivered, and having prosperous lives.

This is the good news. This is the gospel. The good news that the Lord wants us to proclaim to the nations, to take to the people of the earth. Everybody wants that. There is not anybody that does not want that. What is the problem then? The problem is the messenger. The Word of God says "How blessed are the feet of the messengers that bring good news to the people." Many times the messengers get in the way of the message. We do that with our attitudes.

The Lord has three attitudes towards His people. The first one is goodness, the second one is tolerance, and the third one is patience.

I Corinthians 13:8 - "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never fails." This is the attitude that has to be present if one is going to see people come to the Lord. If the Lord were going to mark iniquity, if He is going to judge people, no one would have a chance. But the Lord

does not find fault with us. The Lord knows that everybody has sinned. Everybody has fallen short, and "there is none that does good, no not one."

The Lord realized that He must demonstrate His love so that everybody can be saved. That is why the Lord in His love came for all of us. Jesus did not just come for the righteous ones because there were no righteous ones according to the Lord.

People think that they are doing many good things, but they may have the kind of attitude that Jesus talked about. One guy was standing in the temple saying, "Lord, I thank you that I give my tithes. I give my offerings. I go to church. I help the poor. I do all these wonderful things. I thank you, Lord, that I am not like that guy over there."

What was that guy over there doing? He was down on his face before the Lord saying, "Lord, forgive me I am a sinner. I am separated from you. I do not do anything in my life that is worthy of you. Forgive me and help me."

Jesus asked, "Which one of these men went away blessed?" One had nothing to do with God helping him. It was he doing it all. The other one said, "Lord, I need you in my life, without you I can not do anything."

Which one of these two went away blessed? Jesus said the one who acknowledged his need for the Lord went away blessed.

Some people do not think that they need God. They think that God is only for people with problems. What they do not realize is that death is a problem. Everybody is going to face death someday. In fact it is the main problem for every person on the face of the earth. You are going to die eventually, and you are going stand before God for judgement.

The Lord says that anybody who stands before Him in judgement is not going to stand. That is why He says, "I am going to have to show my love and my mercy to the people, give them the opportunity to pass through death to life and be saved, and have life with me forever." Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as their salvation, will be saved forever.

That is difficult to understand for many people who have everything that the world has to offer. They think that they do not have any problems. They think they do not have any needs, and they do not need the Lord.

What they have is a need for a relationship with the Lord. The Lord has given us that opportunity through Jesus Christ, but He has given it in love and in mercy. You can not work for it, you cannot earn it, and you cannot buy it. Your great intelligence and wisdom can not ever discern it or acquire it. It is only possible through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He died on the cross for you to give His life, so that you might have life.

Understand that Jesus was not just a man. Jesus was God come in the flesh. "You shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. And whoever believes on Him will not perish but will have everlasting life." He said, "I come also that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (Right now) **John 10:10.**

We have to understand that God does not find fault with us. If He was to mark iniquity (**Psalms 130**) nobody would have a chance.

Have you ever found fault with people? Have you found fault with yourself? Why are you finding fault with yourself or others when God does not find fault with you?

Did you know that nobody changes if you keep looking at their faults. You change by looking at the blessing, the solution. Did you know that God is not concerned about your problem? He is concerned about your solution. He is concerned about changing things.

If you keep looking at your problem, you will never get out of your problem. If you keep looking at yourself, your resources or others, you will never get out of your problem. Only the Lord can help you out of it. You have to believe that to be able to receive it. As soon as you acknowledge His presence, then He says that He is going to come in and start to help you. "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will not go away empty and will not be ashamed."

In this process we have to understand that God is a good God. He cares about us and He loves us. He wants to protect us, defend us, provide for us, and save us. He cares for us even more than we care for ourselves. We do not even know how to care for us the way God does. He knows what we need before we need it. And He knows what is going to be the result.

He knows our beginning from our end and He has a good plan for our lives. We have to know that. God has a good plan for our lives, and we are not here by chance. God has a good plan for those whose lives we touch.

To allow that environment for the Holy Spirit to minister God's goodness to people, we must be thankful for what the Lord has done for us. Did you thank God that He did not judge you when you were born? Do you thank God that He overlooks a lot? Do you understand that God has begun a good work in you? He does not want to judge us. He wants to save us. Jesus said, "I did not come to condemn the world. I came to save." He said, "If the world is condemned, they condemn themselves by not believing on God's goodness and receiving these gifts of life in Him."

It is very easy to receive the eternal life of God. Just say, "Lord, forgive me for my old selfish ways. I confess with my mouth Jesus Christ is my Lord. I believe that Jesus lived and died for me and rose from the dead for me so that I can have life with you, and I am born again. I turn from my old selfish life, my own judgmental, critical, self consumed gratified life, and I turn to God because God has first loved me." Now I respond in love to Him and when I do that He gives me a new life. I am what the Bible calls born again."

Jesus said, "Except a man be born again of water and of the spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of God." No matter how much money you have, no matter how much education, no matter what great reputation, or fame or fortune you have, you can not enter into life with the Lord forever except through Jesus.

In that process we have to understand that the Lord sets before us blessing and cursing, life and death. He says choose Life. He says He wants us to have life.

Once a person understands the goodness of God towards us and that He wants everybody to have that life, then we can start to look at tolerance. The Lord has allowed many things to happen before we have come to this point in life and He has not judged us on those things.

Did you know that the Lord really does not want to judge anybody? He wants to save everybody. He wants to love everybody. But again, people judge themselves by not believing and receiving God's love.

Most people do not hear about God's tolerance. They see God as a wrathful judge sitting up in the heavens just waiting to strike down people. (Have you ever had that thought?) They are afraid to come to church because they think that the Lord is going to strike them down. They think that God causes heart attacks. They think that God is doing this and doing that. Jesus said, "that the thief has come to

steal, kill, and destroy, but I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly" (**John 10:10**).

Did you know that if you get out of the blessing of God through disobedience that you are free game for a thief? Many people have chosen to do that. That is why a lot of things have happened in their lives. But it was not the Lord doing it. God's plan is for good, to prosper (**Jeremiah 29:11**), to give us hope and a future.

What you have to understand about the quality of God's tolerance is that it is rooted in love. Many people think that it is love to rescue somebody. God does not rescue people. He provides salvation. He lets every person be accountable for his actions. Whatever a man sows is what he is going to reap. If you sow to the spirit you will be blessed, if you sow to the flesh you will be cursed. Everybody is responsible for his or her own life and own actions and consequences.

People say that it is love not to let a person fail, but that is not love. You are taking from them the responsibility for their lives and their actions. How can that be love? They become dependent or reliant on you. Did you know that controlling people are like that? Others judge that person and cut them off out of their lives. It says, "Judge not lest you be judged." It is going to come back to you. You are going to be cut off. Jesus says do not judge. Let God be the judge. Our part is to love and to encourage people, but let people be responsible for their own lives and their own actions. If somebody wants to be mean and nasty, you love him or her and are kind to them.

The reason people want to fix the mean and nasty person is that they do not like their meanness and nastiness in their lives. If you want to be mean or nasty, go over there. That is fine, but do not come around me. (When people have different beliefs, different faiths, and different religious thoughts.) The Bible says respect and honor everyone and their right to believe whatever they want to believe, whether true or false.

Did you know that the day will come when God will judge people for their beliefs? Whether right (of God) or whether wrong (of the devil.) But you will never win somebody to the Lord if you are always running around putting him or her down, putting down their beliefs, and putting down their thoughts about things.

Did you know that the thoughts of man are futile? That is what the Lord says. But our thoughts about other people's thoughts are just as futile. Jesus never judged people's thoughts. He always spoke the truth in love and let it go. If people want

to receive it, they receive it. If they do not, then they do not receive it. Let those who have ears, hear what the Spirit of the Lord says.

A definition of tolerance is forbearing, tolerating views, beliefs and practices of others that differ from one's own. Freedom from bigotry or prejudice.

Have you ever prejudged situations or people before you ever even knew them or talked to them? You judged them just by the way they looked or the way they acted. You can also do that with opinions, beliefs, or ways of doing things. Have you ever done everything perfectly? Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." No one is perfect, everybody has deviated from the path, and even the people who are doing the best they can are not on track all the time

Yet you think you see clearly. Jesus talked about the religious people of His day. He said, "You think you see clearly when you do not see clearly at all. You have a log in your own eye. Take it out first, deal with yourself then you can see clearly to help somebody else get theirs out." People are in process.

Jesus has given the Word of God to us, which will give us abundant life. Why? These are God's words. Do you understand that to one person it is the truth and to somebody else, it might just be an opinion? I am not going to argue or quarrel with that person if they do not believe in what I believe in. But when they see it working in my life, then they will see that is something they want and need.

The Lord can use many ways to do many things in a person's life. However, if you do not believe in going to movies, you should not go to a movie. Did you know that God can speak through a movie? Did you know that God used even evil kings in the Bible to accomplish His purpose? God did not see them as evil. (God calls things that be not as though they are.) God gives everybody an opportunity to turn to Him. That is the attitude of the Lord. He wants everybody saved. No matter what you have done or what you have been involved in the Lord sees you through the eyes of Jesus as holy and blameless, worthy, acceptable to Him. He is not judging us in Jesus!

When Jesus died on the cross, He saved everybody. Salvation was provided for everybody. People say, "I am believing God to save my son, or my daughter, or my uncle," but Jesus has already saved them. What you need to pray is, "Lord, enable my son or my daughter or my uncle to receive the love of God and to receive what Jesus has done."

The Lord sees you as forgiven and holy. We need to see each other as forgiven and holy, with the unconditional love of God. Jesus brought good news. He was a good messenger, and He went to the cross to give His life to demonstrate the love of God.

It was not just talk. Jesus showed us.

I was at a movie a while back where they said, "Show me the money." That was a demonstration of love. "If you are serious, show me. Do not just talk. Show me and demonstrate it." Jesus demonstrated the love of God for every one of us in giving His own life for us that we might have life with God. All we need to do is receive that gift, and say, "Thank you, Lord, for that gift of life."

In life many people throw out the baby with the bath water. Have you ever done that before? You figured that a person was not going to show you anything so you were going to throw away what you need. Have you ever said some stupid "off the wall" thing like, "I do not ever want to see you again as long as I live!" Did you later forget that you said that? You forgot because you had said it in a moment of passion. I tell people not to listen to a word people say when they are telling you something in anger. Do not even listen to it. They are just venting.

Romans 2:4 says that tolerance is one of the qualities of God. We have the qualities of God's goodness, God's tolerance, and God's patience. It is this loving kindness which leads us to repentance (to change).

God is changing us into His image. It is not happening overnight. We need to see that there is not any impossible situation that the Lord can not change. With man it might be impossible, but not with God. And when we bring the Lord into the situation, then God makes it possible for us to change.

Numbers 12:3 - Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. What does humble mean? It means that this was a man who was relying upon God, not upon himself, or his own strength, his own wisdom, his own wealth, his own fame and fortune. He was relying upon God for everything, to deal with every aspect of his life. One version says that Moses was meek above all people.

This is the quality involved in tolerance. A humble heart does not judge people. A humble heart refrains from judging people. A humble heart commits people to the Lord. A humble heart refuses to get into strife with people, argue, quarrel, etc. over beliefs, doctrines, thoughts, or opinions.

The Lord spoke to me one day and said, "Son, I am not interested in your opinion about anything." He said, "I am not interested in anybody's opinion about anything. Continue to teach my truth. My word is my truth to the people."

People are free to believe it or reject it. Receive it or forget it. People are free to do whatever they are going to do with it. But the fact of God is that just because somebody says "No" today does not mean that tomorrow he is not going to say "yes."

Have you ever been in sales? You learn that just because somebody does not feel that they need a product today does not mean that they will not need it tomorrow. We need to present the information so that they can make a choice for it. The day will come that they are going to need it. I can guarantee you that the day is going to come when you are going to need Jesus Christ in your life as your Lord and Savior. If it means right up to the end (at the point of death), the only way over death is life in Jesus.

Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who lives and believes in me though he dies, yet shall he live, and he who lives and believes in me will never die." When I come to grips with that and understand that, then I have life. You must understand that the Lord is patient and tolerant about things. That gives us time to change.

Have you ever acted crazy? What is crazy? Not believing God, that is crazy. Not obeying God, that is crazy. The Bible said when the prodigal son came to his right mind, he understood that even the servants back in his father's house had it better than he did out there in the world. And he said, "I will humble myself and go back home." Now his father was tolerant and patient. He forgave him, loved him, and received him.

Moses was a man humble beyond all men, but what had happened just before this was said? Miriam and Aaron had begun to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife. (Did you know that Moses married an African wife?) Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses.

Have you ever been talked about because of something that you have done or something that you have said? (Prejudices of other people - Bigotry of other people.)

Miriam and Aaron said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" They were using this thing that he did, and they considered it wrong. They were now going into the spiritual realm. (Did you know that God set up Moses as the leader of the people to lead them into the Promised Land? Did you know that when the Lord sets you into something, no one can take it away from you. Nobody can usurp that authority because God is not like people. People can be sweet-talked out of things and into things. People change their minds (**Num. 23:19**) Never judge people. Judge the action, but do not judge the person.)

Do you know what they were saying about the wife that Moses married? They are badmouthing her, and they were badmouthing him. They were bad mouthing God for selecting Moses. (Moses had married this lady.)

Did you know that Moses could marry anybody he wanted under the Lord's direction? Did you know that people will marry anybody they want even without the Lord? It is a choice. If you make your bed, then lie in it.

Moses was trying to lie in it, but these other ones were trying to lie in it with him. They were meddling in his business. It was none of their business what he was doing. But then they said, "He is not hearing God." We hear God just as much as he does. God speaks through us and we are going to go for it." They asked, "Hasn't He also spoken through us?" And the Lord heard this.

You do not ever have to fight your own battles. Understand that the Lord hears all that is going on around you. He hears all of this stuff. You do not have to come back at somebody who does something ridiculous, or says some ridiculous thing. The Lord is for you. The Lord tolerates many things because He knows people.

But now Miriam and Aaron had moved beyond a people thing and were touching God's person, namely His servant Moses. "The Lord heard this." At once the Lord told Moses, Miriam and Aaron to come out to the tent of meeting. When the three of them came out, the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance to the tent, and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward He said, "Listen to my words."

He told them that He spoke with Moses personally, but He did not speak with them personally. (The anger of the Lord burned against them.) He left them, and when the cloud lifted, there stood Miriam leprous, like snow. When Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy, he said to Moses, "Please pray, my Lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed."

Now who had the ability to forgive or to hold this thing against them? Moses did.

Jesus gave the same thing to the church in **Matthew 18** to hold sin or to forgive sin. If people want to ask for forgiveness, they can be forgiven; if they do not want to ask for forgiveness, then the sin is still on their shoulders.

The Lord had left and Moses was standing there with Aaron and Miriam. Miriam was now considered an outcast because there was no cure for leprosy in their day. The person was considered an outcast in their society and could not be a part of anything that was going on. She was untouchable. No one could come near her and she could not come near anybody else. Did you know that her life was now over?

Then what happened? (You will learn something about Moses, and you will learn something about the Lord.)

Miriam had been rebellious towards God and towards the leadership, and a curse came upon her. When Aaron said to Moses, "Please, my Lord, do not hold against us the sin, which we so foolishly committed," do you realize that His sister Miriam led Aaron into being rebellious?

Do not ever let people lead you into doing wrong. It will get you into trouble.

Aaron said, "Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away." And so Moses cried out to the Lord, "Oh, God, please heal her."

Did you know that this is tolerance? Moses was not concerned about the rebellion that she had towards him and towards God. He just wanted to see her healed. He wanted to see her blessed. That is tolerance that is humility. He did not want to see anybody hurt.

Do you remember the two disciples who wanted to call down fire on Samaria? Jesus looked at them and said, "Know ye not of what spirit you are of? I did not come to condemn and to destroy, I came to save."

This was also the heart of Moses: Heal her Lord. Save her. Help her. The Lord replied to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days, and after that she can be brought back." And so Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days. The people did not move on until she was brought back.

Nothing more is heard about Miriam after that. She learned a lesson.

Note the heart of Moses, and note the heart of God. God did not leave the leprosy on her, only enough for her to get the lesson. The thief would have killed her with it, but God overrode it. However, she had to make a change.

What was the heart of Moses towards his sister? Forgive her, heal her, love her, Lord. That was tolerance in spite of what she was doing. Do you know that she was one prejudiced, ambitious, rebellious woman? Do you know that God changed her? Do you know that Moses did not have to change her? Moses did not have to say a word to her? The Lord dealt with her!

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never fails." Why? It believes in God. It trusts that God is love and that He is going to make those changes happen. But we have to do what we have to do. Moses had to go on and do what he had to do.

In **Numbers 13** - The Israelites go in and check out the land that God had promised.

Numbers 14:1 - It says all the people of the community raised their voices and wept allowed. Have you ever been around this kind of stuff? --Grumbling, complaining, weeping. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole assembly said, "If only we had died in Egypt or in this desert. Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt? We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

How would you like to be Moses?

Now understand this, Moses never chose to lead these people. God chose Moses to lead the people. But where was Moses' trust? In God! Not in these people!

When you understand tolerance, you understand that people are people and they do people things. They do not always do God things. Anything good that anybody does is like gravy on the mashed potatoes, or whipped cream on strawberry shortcake. It is not expected. People do people things. Even the best people in your life are, at some point, going to let you down. Or, they are going to let you down because you expected things of them that you had no business expecting.

So Moses was confronted with this. Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. What does that mean? The whole crowd was there grumbling and complaining, but Moses and Aaron were on their faces before God. They were not even talking to the people. They were not even looking at the people. They were having nothing to do with the people.

What were they doing? Praying to God! They were trusting God. Anybody knows that you can not say or do anything with people. They have all of their own ideas.

I used to try to hog tie people to save them from going the wrong way and doing the wrong things. I quit doing that. They ended up cursing me, saying that I was controlling and manipulating. All I was trying to do was save them from getting into trouble.

The Lord taught me tolerance. He said let them go do what they are going to do. Let them reap whatever they are going to reap. Let them come to the end of their rope. Then maybe they will humble themselves, ask God's forgiveness, turn around and come back.

In the meantime, I would be praying for them and loving them. I would be there and I would be waiting. Like the father waiting for the prodigal son to come back home. Do you know that the father went on about his business? He did not just stand there and wait for that kid all of that time. He had to go do what he had to do.

Do you understand that you are not to judge that person? You are not to cut them off. You are not to break faith or separate from them even though they separate themselves from you. When they come back, you receive them like nothing ever happened. That is tolerance, patience, and God's loving-kindness that leads people to change.

Moses fell face down to pray in front of the whole Israelite community. Joshua talked to the people about how God had given them the land. It was theirs. Why were they rebelling against Moses and God? Moses did not have anything to do with this, and God did not have anything to do with this. Get your faith up, believe God!

They were not listening. Verse 10: The whole assembly talked about stoning them. They tried to kill them, throwing rocks at them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, "How

long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with the plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a Nation greater and stronger than they."

Do you know that the Lord is saying, "Moses I am going to start all over with you, and forget all of these unbelieving people." A lot of people say, "Well, how can God do that? Do you know that this was a test? (The Lord will not ever forsake His covenant with His people.) This was a test for Moses. Moses said to the Lord Verse 13 Numbers 14: "Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. They will tell the inhabitants of this land about how you are with these people and that you have been seen face-to-face. Your cloud stays over them, and you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land He promised them on oath, so He slaughtered them in the desert. (Moses was coming through as a mighty man of God, with the tolerance, the patience, and the goodness of the Lord.) And now may the Lord's strength be displayed just as you have declared. The Lord is slow to anger."

Moses was reaffirming the Lord's qualities. This is what we need to do when we get into that place where we are dealing with nasty, angry people, or maybe with our own selves. "The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love, forgiving sin, and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation in accordance with His great love."

Moses said, "Lord, forgive the sins of these people just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." In other words, Lord, we are all in this thing together. You show yourself mighty by Your love, and do something to help the people. Forgive them.

That is the heart that God wants in every one of us. That is the heart of tolerance. - Not condoning or permitting the sin, but loving the person. Loving that person and realizing that God has a better way. (Perhaps they are out of their heads right now, as we have been out of our heads before.) You never forget that it could just as easily be you as them, if it were not for the grace and mercy of God.

Maybe it used to be you doing the same things that they are doing now. Remember that you judge people and you are doing the same thing.

PART FOUR TOLERANCE GOD'S WAY

God is tolerant with people, not with demonic activity. This is very important. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. He did not come to permit and tolerate it.

People are tolerating and permitting things in their lives that they should not be tolerating and permitting. They should be taking authority over things, and saying, "No, in the Name of Jesus, we refuse to have this happening anymore! We will not permit this! We will not allow this to happen in the name of Jesus! Get out of my house! Get out of my life! Get out of my thinking! Get out of my family! Get out of my business!"

Do not be crying about things that you should be taking authority over. You should be doing something about things that are demonically motivated.

But when it comes to people that is something different. If a person is under a demonic influence, then take authority over that influence. Tell that influence to go away in Jesus Name! Tell it to bow to the name of the Lord!

There is a distinction between demonic activity and a person's will. The Lord is tolerant where people make choices. He permits people to choose what they are going to have, for better or for worse, for life or for death, for blessing or for cursing (**Deuteronomy 30:19**). He allows time to pass so people can change. God's goodness keeps going out towards people.

In the previous chapter we were discussing how Moses was a humble, meek man beyond all the people of the earth. Miriam and Aaron came against him because he married a Cushite woman, a woman from Africa, of different race and color. They were prejudiced. We need to get prejudice out of our lives. Prejudice messes up our lives. Prejudiced people are not tolerant people. They are rigid people. It is amazing the many areas of intolerance and rigidity that we have in our lives related to our beliefs.

God's tolerance allows people to believe and do whatever they want to do, and respects people's rights. However, Christians are some of the most intolerant people because they have not been aware of or understood how the Lord's tolerance operates.

God is not intolerant. He is tolerant. But He has truth. When you have to get rid of everybody that does not believe like you, that is not the Spirit of Christ. When the two disciples, James and John, the sons of thunder, tried to call down the fire on people who rejected Jesus, he looked at them and said, "No, don't you know what spirit you are of? We did not come to destroy, we came to save."

When God was dealing with Miriam, Moses' response was "Lord, heal her. Take her out of this, do not hold this against her." This is a tolerant person. This is a person that loves.

The only way you can be tolerant is to have faith in God, hope in God, and love for God working in your life. When you have faith, hope and love working, then you are going to be able to be tolerant with people. You are going to have faith, hope, and love working in their behalf too.

I Corinthians 13:8, says love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things love never fails. We need to love people, encourage people, stay with people, and be faithful to God and to people. We will allow certain things to happen, trusting God will be able to turn things around with people.

With God things are not impossible, but with man it is. Jesus said that with man it is impossible, but with God nothing is impossible. It was impossible that any of us be saved, but God made it possible through faith in Jesus Christ.

In your life you are going to get opportunities to practice tolerance. The only way you are going to win anybody to the Lord is to respect and honor them. Speak and act God's Word in love. There is not anybody that does not want the good news of what the Lord says about His love for people. He wants them saved, loved, free, delivered, healed, healthy, and prosperous. There is not anybody on the face of the earth that does not want that.

God makes you loveable because God is loveable. When people understand God is loveable they want that. The problem is not the message; the problem has been the messenger. The messengers are intolerant. The messengers are not patient. The messengers do not seem to care. The messengers are not showing God's goodness. They are showing God as an unjust judge, sitting up in the heavens just waiting to spike somebody down.

The Bible says that God does not find fault with us. Do you find fault with yourself? Do you find fault with others? If you find fault with yourself, you will

find fault with others because you want to get the heat off of yourself and put it onto somebody else.

No one likes being picked on and condemned. No one wants that. God's loving-kindness leads people to change and turn around. Each person has to change himself. No one can make the change for him. You have to want to change yourself, but there has to be something that motivates you to want to change. What we are talking about here is the love of God.

God loves us even when we do not love Him. He loves us even when we are unlovely and unlovable. He loves us, and He stays with us. He cares for us, and He is gently wooing us to want to change. You have to want to change, and when you want to change, then the Lord will enable you. **Philippians 2:12-13: For it is God who works in you enabling you to will and to do His good pleasure.**

Christians should relate to unbelievers by not judging anything. God will judge. It is not our place (**I Corinthians 5**).

How should Christians relate to one another? Part of tolerance is flexibility. You have to flow with the Spirit of God. It is very easy to be intolerant. It does not take a lot of ability. Basically, if people are not doing what they are supposed to be doing, (listening, following procedures), they will receive the consequences of their actions. We need to be there for them when they come to their senses (**2 Timothy 2:24-26**).

Everybody has his own set of rules, rituals, values, and ways of doing things. It is easy to set that up. You can say, "Yes, it is for order." But how many times have God and others broken out of your order? Are you going to allow you life to be "messed around?"

As long as people are seeking the truth, they are going to find the truth. Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find, ask and it will be given, knock and doors will be open." You have to be moving along in that direction so something can happen. It does not matter what religion people are into, if they are seeking God, He will reveal Himself to them. Eventually they will come to the truth.

We need to be even more tolerant amongst the Christian family. The only difference between unbelievers and us is that we believe. A lot of times we have not changed. We are still carrying around with us the same habits, values, and the same way of doing things as before we became Christians.

Sometimes you just have to look around you to see what is going on. You have to stay with people to see change happen.

For instance, do you have a husband that leaves his socks all over? Or do you have children that you always have to pick up after? There is always somebody breaking into your life and making it not so wonderful. You have to learn to flow with the Spirit of God. The Lord knows that people need to learn that He has everything under control. Eventually the Lord can make things change. Eventually people can change as they respond to the loving kindness of God. The Lord keeps on loving us. He is not judging us. That is why He shed His blood at the cross. That is why He rose from the dead, so that we could have life with God. He knows that eventually things are going to change.

There are people out there who believe God, but they may be going through things in their life and have different attitudes. Things happen and they may be acting out of sorts. Have you ever had that happen to you? You do not even recognize that person when you look in the mirror. You need to be as tolerant with others as you are with yourself.

Numbers 12: Moses came out of this situation, he picked Miriam up, and they moved on. The next thing you know they go exploring in the land of Canaan. When they got in there, the spies went in and checked out the land. They came back with reports. They reported things in **Numbers 13:27** - They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land, which you sent us. It does flow with milk and honey, pure is its fruit, but the people who live there are powerful. The cities are fortified, and they are very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there (These are the giants). The Amalekites live in the south, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

Have you ever started listening to all of the negative things that are going on? You say, "Life is good, but I have this going on and I have that going on at home, and I have this going on with my in-laws, and I have my own problems and some one else is dumping their problems on me, and nobody picks up after themselves, and I just have to do everything." Have you ever been there?

Numbers 13:30 - Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses, and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it." In other words, God said it is ours; we can do this. But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can not attack those people. They are stronger than we are." And they spread among the people of Israel a bad report, an evil report, and an unbelief

report. A negative report is to God an evil report. Unbelief and evil are the same thing. The men spread this report. In other words, they felt that way themselves so they spread their unbelief to others.

Have you ever done that, or somebody did that to you? The next thing you know, you doubt too. This is the spirit of division. The Lord hates it. What is He going to do with it?

The men said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size."

Numbers 14:1 All the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt, or in this desert. Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt at the house of slavery and bondage? We should choose our leader and go back to Egypt."

What they are saying is that they should choose an unbelieving leader and go back to Egypt. Why? Because Moses was a man of faith. He was a man who believed God. Caleb and Joshua were trying to get them to move ahead too, but these people were all going back.

A lot of people want to go back to bondage. They want to go back to the depression. They want to go back to the sickness, back to the anxiety, back to the discontent, back to the poverty.

Who would want to do that? "Forget the things behind," Paul says. "Let's press ahead to the mark of the high calling in God which is ours in Christ Jesus."

Bondage looks good once you get out of it and forget where you came from. You start looking at your new life as bondage. Looking at your life through negativity, rather than faith in God, will cause you to be aware of all the problems and negative things - All the "what ifs" and the "who what's" and the "He said, she said what game kind of stuff." Instead of seeing yourself as having a blessed life that God has given, saved from that old person and possessing a whole new life with God, you can forget all about God. These people forgot all about God.

What were they thinking about? - Giants and self. They were thinking about the obstacles out there. They forgot who had been leading them with the pillar of fire

during the night and the pillar of cloud during the day. Forgot that God was even around. Forgot that God gave them the land. All He said to do was go down and possess it. They said, "We can not do it." Of course they could not do it. Without God they could not do it, but with God they could do all things. All things are possible with God. You can be patient and tolerant with God.

They were not thinking about God's goodness. They were not thinking about all the blessings they had. They were thinking about all that was negative. Verse 5: Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly. They did not even deal with these people, did they? They fell down on their faces and talked to God.

When you get to the point that you are fed up with the people around you, you need to draw near to God. Then God will draw near to you. He will give you what you need to deal with the people. The next thing you know, the Lord will do something.

Numbers 14:5 - Joshua stood up talked to them about things. He said, "Do not be afraid of the people in the land because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us, do not be afraid of them." Verse 10: But the whole assembly talked about killing them.

They said, "Let us get rid of the guys that are believing God." When you are in unbelief, you do not want somebody coming around who is talking with faith to you. When you do not want to act on your healing, or you are not happy in your marriage situation or your relationship, you might think, "Let's get rid of these guys that are believing God." You do not want to change your unbelief and action, you want to get rid of the obedient believers in your life. This is persecution for the Word of God, believers!

Have you ever felt like that before but you changed? You changed because somebody cared for you and stuck by you until you changed. They moved you right along into that love until you started to say, "Why am I thinking this way? God has something better for my life. I am going to look at Him. I am going to believe in Jesus Name. I am going to expect change."

My wife Diana was always praying for me to change, but God changed her. I did not change when she wanted me to change. I changed because she kept loving and respecting me, and God changed me.

Numbers 14:13: After they wanted to kill the men of God, the believing ones, the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting. The Lord basically said to Moses, verse 11: "How long will these people treat me with contempt. How long will they refuse to believe in me in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them?"

It sounds as if the Lord is getting low on tolerance. But you must understand that the Lord is always tolerant. He is always longsuffering, the Lord is always loving. What is happening here is a test for Moses.

Look at what the Lord said, "I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they."

Now if you were Moses' shoes, wouldn't that sound like a good deal? To get rid of all of those grumbling weirdoes, and start all over.

"If the Lord should mark iniquity, who shall stand? Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." What is Moses' response? (You will see the tolerance of God working and developing in this man.)

Moses said to the Lord, "Then the Egyptians will hear about it. By your power you brought these people up from among them and they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O Lord, are with these people, and that you, Lord, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night." What an awesome confession of faith. "If you put these people to death all at one time, then the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 'The Lord was not able to bring these people into the land He promised them on oath, and so He slaughtered them in the desert'." That is not a good report. Is it?

Who was Moses concerned about? He was concerned about God's reputation, and he was concerned about the people. When we are not concerned about God's reputation, then we are going to spread the wrong kind of testimony and witness to the world that has been demonstrated so many times.

"Let's go kill all of the people who are out there doing ungodly things. Let's go kill them and get rid of them all. If they are not doing what is godly, let's dispose of them." Have you heard that before? Have you heard "Let's exterminate them?" You heard about the guys shooting abortion doctors, "In the name of the Lord." And who gets the wrap? The Lord gets the wrap. The Lord gets the bad

reputation. That is not what God is about at all. "I have not come to destroy, I have come to save." "Holy crusades" - I do not think so!

What Moses was concerned about was the Lord's reputation. It is high time the church of the Lord Jesus Christ gets concerned about the Lord's reputation. That is what tolerance is all about. If God were to start to strike down people that did not believe correctly, nobody would be on the face of the earth anymore.

He loves His people - Believer and unbeliever alike. He causes the rain to fall on both the just and on the unjust. Many people do not understand this fact about God. They can not figure out why the rain falls on the unjust as well as the just. People think that the unjust are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. This is where tolerance comes in. God gives us enough time so that we are able to repent and change. Have you had the Lord give you enough time so that you could change something?

Many people do not last in their marriages because they do not give people time to change.

Verse 17: "Now may the Lord's strength be displayed just as you have declared. The Lord is slow to anger." This is saying the truth about God. This is what the world and the church need to understand about God. Many Christians are so afraid of God that they do not even know they can come into church. They do not even know that they can pray. They do not even know that God cares about them. Here is the truth: the Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving of sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

In other words, if people continue to willfully knowingly go against God's practices, they will be dealt with. Why? They allowed themselves to move outside of God's blessing, protection, and provision. There is a thief out there, Jesus talks about in **John 10:10** who has come to steal, kill, and destroy. If you go out there and willfully, knowingly go against what God says to do, you are going to allow a thief to come into your life.

Psalm 91: "Under the shadow of the Almighty." Protected, cared for, loved - but if you willfully choose to go outside of that position, then a thief comes into your life to steal, kill, and destroy. Do not think that he will not. But Jesus says, "I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly." That is what people need to understand.

There are a lot of people sitting in church that are under guilt, condemnation, and such unworthiness that they do not know if they are doing what is right or wrong. Thank God I am saved by God's grace, through faith, not by my works, lest I should boast. (And sometimes you do not have anything to boast about.) But if God were to mark iniquity, nobody would stand.

I am not saying that God overlooks things! What I am saying is that God's desire is for us to be blessed, loved, cared for, and protected; and to see the good plan that He has for our lives come to pass. We need to allow that to happen rather than allowing the thief to come.

"He punishes the children for the sin of the fathers through the third and fourth generation." This is the curse that goes down because people learn ways that are not God's ways. They teach those ways to their children. Their children grow up and do the same things that they did, and they pass it down to their children. That curse goes down because people are living contrary to what God says to do, having attitudes and behavior that are contrary to God.

However, this can work for blessing too. You can pass blessing down from generation to generation.

Moses said, "In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." The Lord had forgiven the people one thing after another, after another. They were always stumbling, always complaining, always rebellious, always unbelieving. But the Lord stayed with them. The Lord replied to Moses, "I have forgiven them as you have asked." That is God's heart. The Lord's heart is to forgive and not to judge.

The Lord wants to forgive you no matter where you have come from. He wants to move you into a place of life and blessing. He does not want people condemned, guilty, and judged. He takes no pleasure even in judgement. The Lord takes no pleasure in the day when people who have condemned themselves by not receiving the love of God in Jesus, stand before the judgement seat and have to go to the place of fire and brimstone. God wants everybody saved and blessed.

God wants everybody to believe in Jesus and believe for the things of God. He does not want anybody lost. He takes no pleasure in that. He takes pleasure when everybody enters into His blessings.

"Nevertheless as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth." The Lord went on to say, "not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs that were performed in Egypt and in the desert, but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times, not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath for the forefathers. No one that treated me with contempt will ever see it."

This means that the people who do not believe God are not going to see the blessing. It is not because the Lord does not want to do it. It is because they do not want to receive it. What was God saying? He was saying that they were not going to see the Promised Land.

Do you know that this life is not all there is? Do you know that everyone of those people that died in the wilderness had the opportunity to receive when Jesus went down and preached to those in the holding place of the dead? He preached the good news to every one of them. Everyone was given an opportunity to receive and believe (**I Peter 3:18-22, 4:6**).

Do not get into the place where you are judging somebody else as saved or not saved. That is not your place. That is not your call, or your concern. Our part is to share the good news. Our part is to love people. Our part is to do the works of God on this earth. Our part is to believe God and to stand in faith.

The Lord said, "But because my servant Caleb is of a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he wanted and his descendants will inherit it. It says the Amalakites and Cananites who were living in the valleys turned back tomorrow and set towards the desert. He sent them on a course."

Moses had the heart of God. He had the goodness of God, the desire of God to forgive, to heal, to restore, and to love. He had the heart of tolerance that gives people opportunity. He respected, honored, loved, and gave people opportunity to believe whatever they were going to believe, but he knew what was true. He knew what was right, and he did not compromise that. He knew that God was able to move people along into the truth, and he had the truth, the heart of God. He displayed it to God. The Lord responded, "Yes, I forgive."

This was a test for Moses. Every great man and woman of God will be tested on these things to see whether or not we have the heart of God. The heart of God is tolerance.

The third quality of God is patience **Romans 2:4**. It is part of God's loving kindness that leads people to change, whether they are unbelievers or believers who have some attitudes that are out of line.

Numbers 16: The Lord always leaves a remnant. He always has a group of people that hold on to the truth, and those are the ones he can bless. He wants to bless everybody, but only the ones who hold on to the truth and continue can really receive the full blessing (**John 8:31-32**).

We find in **Numbers 16** that all of a sudden another breakout happened. Verse 1: "Now Korah the son of Isar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and one of the sons of Peleth, sons of Rueben, took men; with them were 250 Israelite men well known in the community, leaders who had been appointed members of the council."

These were leaders in their community, and they rose up against Moses. The demonic attitude thief that started with Miriam and Aaron now went into the leadership, and they became rebellious.

It is sad because the people did not really get the drift (understand or remember both good or evil consequences). Didn't they see what happened to Miriam? People forget over time. They get a self-confident, self-righteous nonsense going on in their lives. All of a sudden they forget where they have come from, and who they are, and who is in charge.

The Lord always taught me that students could never be greater than their teacher. Why not? Because their teacher taught them. They may do greater exploits. They may reach more people. They may go on to greater and wonderful things. But they will always have the responsibility to honor their teacher who taught them.

Honor is something God's people need today. People need a sense of honor and respect. This is what makes tolerance work - faith, hope, and love in God. In spite of me and in spite of anybody else, the Lord can make something happen. He can do a miracle. God can do a miracle in your life and in others.

Numbers 16:3 They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron. They said, "You have gone too far. The whole community is holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourself up above the Lord's assembly?"

This was their opinion! This was their idea! (If you learn some wisdom and have understanding about people, you would recognize why they were bringing this

request) Who wanted the power? They did! They wanted the power. They wanted the position. They are projecting their desires on Moses and Aaron.

The Lord said that Moses was the humblest and meekest of all men. Moses did not want this position. He did not even ask for it. God put him into it. And God enabled him and gave him everything to do it. This was not something Moses requested. But God had a plan, and God put him in position. God was going to help him to fulfill what He had given Moses to do.

These people wanted the power. They wanted the recognition. They wanted the honor. But they did not want the cost. They did not want the cost of what is involved. They wanted the recognition.

When Moses heard this, he fell on his face before God, and was talking to God again. This is the way to do it when you get intolerant, rigid, and upset. Fall on your face before God and talk to God. The Lord will answer and help you.

When Moses heard this, he fell face down. Then he said to Korah and all of his followers, "In the morning the Lord will show you who belongs to him, and He will have that person come near Him." In other words, when he fell face down, the Lord spoke to him. He told him what to say when he got up. He was not going to talk to these people out of his own thinking, or understanding.

In verse 21 the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once." In other words, we are going to deal with this. Moses and Aaron fell face down, verse 22 and they cried out, "Oh God, God of the spirits and all mankind. Will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?" (They are making an appeal.) This is tolerance. It would be easier to get rid of the whole bunch.

What happened? Moses said, "Why should everybody die when only a handful of people are doing this?" And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the assembly, move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." These are the troublemakers. Get everybody out of the way and move away from them.

Then what happened? They moved out.

Moses got up and warned them. He said, "This is how we will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things. It is not my idea. And if these men die of natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth

opens its mouth and swallows them with everything that belongs to them and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt."

Moses never took it personally that they were after him. He said that this was against the Lord. Moses understood that he was God's servant. He was just doing what God told him to do. This was done against the Lord (what these people were doing, trying to stir up trouble for their own personal power and glory-out of envy and selfishness.)

As soon as Moses finished saying all of this, the ground under them split apart. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them with their households, all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave with everything they owned. The earth closed over them and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all of the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us, too!"

Where were those unbelieving people? Do you know that they deserved to have the ground open up and swallow them too? But God did not do that. He just dealt with the ones who were responsible for all of the trouble.

Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Eleazar the priest to take the censers out of the smoldering remains and scatter the coals some distance for the censers are holy. The censers of the men, who sinned at the cost of their lives, hammer the censers into sheets to overlay the altar, for they were presented before the Lord and have become holy. Let them be a sign to the Israelites."

So God turned things around. The Lord was not the problem. The problem was the evil in the people's hearts. They refused to receive God's mercy and God's love, spreading that attitude to others. The Lord is not going to hold people unaccountable for their actions. Tolerance does not overlook what people are doing.

Tolerance enables a person not to cut off the other person. He is still accountable and responsible to God and to the people involved in his life and situation. Even the children, it says in **Proverbs**, are responsible and accountable and known by their ways for what they are doing.

What happened was that God turned this into a blessing. Verse 41 "The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 'You have killed the Lord's people' they said." These are the people that God had just spared! They came to Moses and Aaron saying, "You killed the Lord's people." They were grumbling again. This was in their hearts.

Moses and Aaron went to the front of the tent meeting, and the Lord said to Moses, verse 45: "Get away from this assembly so that I can put an end to them at once. And they fell face down again." What were they doing? - Interceding for the people.

This is the way to deal in tolerance, to intercede for the people. Pray that God has mercy on everybody. Pray that God produce faith. Pray that God love the people and forgive them. "Father, forgive them," Jesus said at the cross, "They do not know what they are doing."

This is the way to deal in tolerance - love, faith, and hope. Day after day, this is going on.

This is a very exciting lesson. I have never heard a lesson in my whole life on tolerance. (I have heard lessons on intolerance and prejudice.) This is the quality of God. When we have tolerance working in us, all things are possible because we are allowing God's grace and His mercy to change people's lives.

These times, the Lord said, are for the backslider. I have been seeing people who have drifted way out there come back to God already. I have seen many people come right back to God. God is drawing them back, and they know that they can come back as if nothing ever happened. The Lord is preparing us for His return. People are returning and coming to the Lord's love.

That is how the Lord receives them. But you know that people are going to have to make changes in their lives. At least we know where we can start: God loves me and cares about me.

Yes, you have to make changes. You are not perfect yet. No one can throw any rocks. And stuff your opinions. The Lord and no one else is interested in our opinions.

We trouble ourselves about so many things that are none of our business or concern. We can not do anything about a whole lot of it anyway. If we were to fall down on our faces before God, then the Lord would do something!

When we fall on our faces before God, then God is going to start to do something. Why? Somebody is believing God.

You need to continue to believe God, no matter how you feel, what you think, what your flesh is telling you, or what anybody else is telling you.

There is always somebody who will tell you to give something up. Like Job's wife who said, "Why don't you give up that God stuff and die." "Why don't you forget God and die."

How would you like to be quoted forever in the Word of God with that testimony about yourself? She told Job, "Why don't you forget God and die." What a statement.

Have you ever said something similar? Have you ever thought it? Thinking it is just like saying it.

Do you know that you do not always do everything right? Sometimes you do not even know what is right. Have you ever tried to please somebody and found out that it did not work? What used to please them two days ago may not please them today. The Lord is different. He does not change.

That is why a servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome (**2 Tim 2:24-26**). Gentle, patient, apt to teach (ready to teach), ready for answers. God will grant them the ability to repent and to change. Then they recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.

It is each person's call and choice. We can try to shove somebody along into the right place. We can try to lead him or her or take their hands, but each person has to take that step for himself to recover himself out of the snare of the devil.

This is where tolerance comes in.

PART FIVE KINDNESS

The Lord has changed your life in different ways:

1) You are saved, 2) Changes are starting to happen, attitudes are starting to change. This is because of His loving kindness.

There are three qualities included in God's loving-kindness. *The first one is God's goodness.* God loves us unconditionally. He cares about us and wants to bless us in every way.

The second quality is tolerance. Because of God's tolerance, He puts up with a lot of stuff from us: Attitudes, behaviors, unbelief, rebellion, independent thinking, stubbornness etc.

Many people think that they have done things in their lives for which God would strike them down. If that were the case, then you would not be alive. Everybody would be dead. But God is tolerant.

This does not mean that he condones and permits sin in our lives. He has nothing to do with sin. He is holy. Nor does it mean that He misses it, or overlooks it. He does not overlook anything. He does not miss anything.

God is giving us opportunity to repent, turn from our sin, and ask His forgiveness, getting back into the blessing. He does not strike us down the first time we are out of line. (That would be the end of it.) Praise God for His tolerance.

The third quality is patience. God's goodness, tolerance, and patience lead us to repent and to change our ways to God's ways.

Do you have a quality in your life that you would like to change? Are you allowing the Lord, and are you in agreement, to make that change? Do you know that you need to change, but you want to do it later? Do you have something in your life that bothers someone?

Do you find that people are tolerant with you? Are you tolerant with yourself? Are you more tolerant with yourself than you are with others?

We have to get honest if change is going to happen. We have to look at things and start to make a change.

We have been looking at Moses as an incredible example of tolerance. God's tolerance was working in him.

As a quick review, remember that Moses took the children of Israel out by the Lord's direction, and the Lord in the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day and went before him and was leading them out of slavery and bondage in Egypt. He was leading them to the Promised Land. Soon they were grumbling about not having any food, and the Lord supernaturally supplied the manna, and then later the quail! They grew tired of the manna, and they wanted some meat. So the Lord sent in the quail and the people ate it raw.

A plague broke out because they were eating the quail raw, eating the blood and what not. The Lord had said, "Do not eat blood." Make sure that everything is cooked well, and no blood in it, because the life is in the blood, and do not participate in that."

Then they were thirsty, and grumbled about that. Moses under the Lord's direction struck the rock with his staff, and the water came out and everybody was taken care of. (If it was not this, it was that) They were always concerned about themselves and their personal, physical needs.

They got to the Promised Land and sent in the people to spy out the land and to come back with the reports. They came back with the report that it was a glowing land. It was great. It was wonderful. It was just like the Lord said, bountiful in every way, but there were giants in the land. They could not take it, they said, and it was more than they could handle.

So they backed off, and this evil report came out from them. Joshua and Caleb tried to talk them out of it and to talk faith, but they were not being talked out of their unbelief. Friends, you ought to note that sometimes people do not want to be talked out of their unbelief. They do not want to be talked out of their fears. They do not want to be talked out of their worries. They want what they are going to have. Do you know that you are going to "eat" what you are talking? You will eat the confession of your mouth. The law of cursing from the tongue supercedes the law of life and health.

You must understand that you have to be willing to allow people not to believe. The people who do not believe have to be willing to accept the consequences of their unbelief. In other words, do not grumble against God and the people who believe God because you are eating the fruit of your unbelief.

The Lord says, "Today I set before you blessing, cursing, life and death, choose life (**Deuteronomy 30:19**). But if you want to choose death, cursing and go the other way, the Lord is not going to stop you!

Be willing to accept the consequences of your choice, and the responsibility of your choice. Tolerance never takes away the responsibility of the person for the consequence of his choice. Meaning: People say, "Why does God allow that to happen?" He allows it to happen because that is what the person chose. It was not what God wanted.

The Lord wanted those people to go into the Promised Land and be blessed, but they did not go in because of their unbelief. Later they changed their minds and decided, "We won't go back to Egypt. We will go into the Promised Land." But they had already made their choice and they could not go in and the enemy killed them. (They had decided to go back out again because that was not where they could go.)

The people wandered around in the wilderness. One day Miriam and Aaron come up with the idea that they had the same Holy Ghost as Moses. Remember that they were all upset about Moses marrying an African woman. Their prejudices and intolerance rose up. They became offended about what he had done.

Do you know that what somebody else does is none of your business? It is his or her choice. It is his life. Someday the person is going to have to give an account to God. Everybody is going to have to give an account to God.

It was not their problem. It was Moses' life, and it was his decision, and it was really none of their business!

Do not base your life and your decisions on your personal preference. Base your life, decisions, and outlook towards others on the basis of God's Word. If God is tolerant with people and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, then we have to say, "Apparently, the Lord looks at things in a different way than I would have. I would have thought that the rain should fall only on the just."

Realize that the "just" used to be the "unjust." It is very interesting that when you get to be "just," then you get an attitude about the "unjust." Perhaps you get a little bit of faith teaching, and now you believe God. Last week you were squabbling and bawling about how bad things were. Now you have a little bit of faith and believe God. You look at another person and say, "Where is your faith? What is your problem?"

The Lord allowed leprosy on Miriam to get her to come to her senses. She was outside of the blessing by judging Moses. When you get outside of the blessing,

things can come upon you. Did you know that it was only for a season, just to get her attention? In fact, you never hear about her again. She just went into her quiet place in God, lived out her life, and never again challenged Moses or the Lord.

But Moses' heart was "Lord, heal her." He did not hold anything against her for what she was doing. Why could he do that? Because he had God's faith, God's hope, and God's love. God's love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; it never fails.

The seed of rebellion had been sown though, and later another break out came from Korah and all of the leaders of Israel. Do you know that rebellion is contagious? (That spirit hopped on the rest of the leaders) Then Moses fell on his face before God. Every time people and situations confronted him, he fell on his face before God. (Literally fell on the ground, face down, seeking God.) Then God appeared and did something with the situation. In this case, the Lord opened up the earth and swallowed up the people who were in rebellion against God and against His servants!

You want to be really slow to judge people. "Judge not," Jesus, said, "Lest you be judged. The measure you judge out will be the measure that comes back." In fact, you get more back than what you gave out. This is a spiritual principle. Forgive people, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together and running over. You always get back more than what you gave, for good or for evil. If you want to give out evil, it will come back more than what you gave out. That is the way it works.

And so Moses forgave everybody. He interceded and said, "Lord, you can not have everybody getting struck down because of what a couple people are doing." The Lord showed mercy, but the day after this all happened (the ground swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram) the people came back and said, "Moses, you killed God's people." And he was dealing with these people for forty years.

Everyday there was something coming up. They were grumbling, complaining, rebellious and disobedient. If it was not one thing, it was another thing. Did you know Moses had tolerance? He had to have to have loved these people.

Have you ever been one of those unlovable ones who were always grumbling, complaining, and disobedient? If you have been there, you need to thank God that there is anybody still around in your life. You need to thank God that He is still with you.

Who wants to be around somebody who is always depressed, always nagging, always bawling and squalling, always "Give me this, give me that," "I don't like this, I don't like that," "What is that person's problem?" "What is going on? Why do they do what they do?" Picking, poking, judging, criticizing, condemning, and belittling. Nothing is ever good enough. "The soup's too cold, it's too hot, it's lukewarm." Why should anybody ever stay around someone like that? It is because of tolerance. But tolerance does not enter into the grumbling and criticizing. It does not agree with it.

People believe all kinds of things. Even unbelief is a belief. People choose to believe some things over other things. Faith in God will supercede faith in people or faith in other things. Faith in God will cause the supernatural to enter into the natural realm to allow things to change. But that is faith, that is believing God. Some people believe that God will heal them. Still others believe that God will not heal them. Other people believe that they are suffering sickness for Christ.

Did you know that is not true? Nowhere in the Bible does it say "suffering sickness for Christ." It says that Christ will heal you. If you are suffering sickness, God wants to heal you. The only time the Bible talks about "suffering for Christ" are when you are suffering persecution for your faith, persecution for the Word of God. People hear phrases like "suffering for Christ" and get their own ideas about it. They miss the importance of basing things on God's Word.

For forty years Moses was running around with these people trying to get them to the Promised Land. Day in and day out, if it was not one thing, it was another. There was always something going on with them.

Numbers 20: Here the people were thirsty again. It says in the first month the whole Israelite community arrived in the desert of Azin and stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

In the forty years after they did not enter into the Promised Land because of their unbelief, they wandered around in this area. They did not understand that God had totally taken care of them. It says that their shoes did not wear out, etc. (Read **Deuteronomy 8**). But they were still not happy. They were still not satisfied. Nothing was good enough. And now there was no water for the community.

We are talking about hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people. Understand that God had taken care of all of these people while they were wandering around in this forsaken area. There were no AM/PM's. There were no stores. There were no grocery stores. There were no farms. There was nothing out there. This was

desert wasteland area. The Lord was taking care of them all of the time and teaching them to rely upon and go to Him as the source. He would take care of things.

There was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They were not going after God. They were going after Moses and Aaron because they could see Moses and Aaron. Now God was there all the time, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, but they were not going after God. They were going after Moses because he was supposed to represent them.

Moses never asked for that responsibility. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord. Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place?"

They keep rehearsing this same speech. Have you ever heard the same speech over and over? Whether out of your own mouth or out of somebody else's? After a while you do not even listen anymore, do you? It is the same old stuff. "The land has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink." Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent meeting and fell face down. They just fell on the ground, face down, and talked to God. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

When you are dealing with people, get on your face before God. Otherwise you would abandon them. You would say, "I am out of here. I have had enough of this stuff, and I'm gone." You would not stay with them. The only way you would stay with them is to get on your face before God. Because there would be nothing there to stay for.

I have cared for God's people for over thirty-five years, and I do not think there is much of anything I have not seen or heard. The things that go on are incredible.

People are very interesting. One minute they are happy, and the next minute they are sad. One minute they are thankful and the next minute they are ungrateful.

It is incredible how people think, based on what is happening on around them, their circumstances and situations. The only thing that can help you to survive in life is faith in God because He is consistent. People are not consistent. It is amazing how people vacillate in faith and feeling.

And so, Moses got before God and started praying. The way of the Lord is tolerance because God never leaves faith. He never leaves love. He never leaves hope. He is always believing and hoping and desiring the best for people. It is His goodness. He never gives up on anybody.

The only way that we are ever going to be like that is to get on our faces before God. It is really easy to say, "Oh God, just open up the ground and let them disappear."

Why? Because our love and our faith are wearing thin. Our hope is wearing thin. "God, please save them. Allow them to come into all that you have." Then in the next breath, "They will never change."

And so Moses got before God. The Lord said, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes, and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."

The Lord said, "Take the staff," but He also said, "Speak to the rock." Now, Moses has gotten mighty used to that staff because God had used it before Pharaoh. When Moses threw it down, and it would turn into a serpent. Pharaoh's guys could do that too, but Moses' staff ate up the other ones. God is always superior.

Then he came to the sea and the Lord said, "Stretch forth the staff." The water parted and the children of Israel crossed on dry ground. Later he struck the rock with the staff, and the water came out.

You get used to things. You get dependent on things. You get to believe about things a certain way, but you must always stay reliant on God.

Just because He did it one way one time does not mean that He is going to do it that way the next time. He may use another way. This is the importance of listening and doing what God wants to be done in that situation.

Moses had heard from God. Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock. Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels." (Now you know we are in trouble. The man of God was speaking out instead of "calling things that be not as though they are." He was getting right into it now.) "Must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Now he was really getting upset). Moses raised his arm

and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out and the community and their livestock drank.

The people did not know the difference. These grumbling, griping people did not know the difference. God Almighty was right in their presence. They said to Aaron, "Make us a golden calf so that we have a god that we can see."

The whole mountain was lit up with God's presence. The glory of God was filling the whole place. Moses came off the mountain glowing, and they did not know God was there. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the site of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I gave them."

Moses did not get to go into the Promised Land because of what he did. Do you think that is unjust? Did God get intolerant? God is a just God. He is always truthful in what He does.

Moses did not whimper a moment about God's decision. But know this today, who was standing in the Promised Land with Jesus and Elijah on the Mount of transfiguration? Moses!

Why? God's goodness, His tolerance, and His patience.

Moses was being disciplined because he did not believe God. But God blessed him in the end.

People say that Moses was totally justified. How could that guy put up with those people all of those years? (God was with Him. If God is with you, you can tolerate a lot of stuff.) But Moses stepped out of faith. He stepped out of obedience. He stepped out of the love for the people. He let the love for the people go. And in that moment of insanity, it cost him.

Do not think that you can go and act however you want to act. Do not think that it does not have effects. It has effects. It has consequences. What did Moses become at that moment? He became a rebel, just like what he called them. He became disobedient just like they were!

Understand, friends, that when we have intolerance, we become what we do not tolerate. We become just like it. The person that you are holding bitterness towards, you become just like he is. That person that you are not forgiving, you

will become just like he is. You become what you hate. It is very interesting how that works. And it will work. It will happen!

Moses never whimpered a moment about that decision of the Lord because he knew the truth down in his heart.

Numbers says, Aaron died thereafter. The Lord allowed Moses to go up and see the land, and from there the Lord took him.

Do you know that it says that Satan fought for his body on the way up. It is very exciting when you think about it. God is good and His mercy endures forever. But everybody will be held responsible and accountable for his or her decisions. There are consequences to our choices. Thank God for His mercy which will help us to work through things, to repent, and to turn from our ways so that we can recover ourselves out of the snare of the devil **II Timothy 2:24-26**. Each of us has to do that ourselves.

Do you think that what happened to Moses was unjust? If so, your love and your faith have dissipated. Moses let people get to him. But you might say, "For forty years the guy was dealing with this!"

It does not matter if it is four days, four minutes, forty years. The love that God has put within us does not dissipate. God remains faithful even when we are not. And it is important that we understand this.

Moses' act of unbelief could have caused him to head down a road and fall away from God? That bitterness or unforgiveness that a person holds towards somebody, or that grudge, or lack of love can cause people to not be forgiven by the Lord. It can cause them to allow demonic activity into their lives that will take them away from the Lord (**Ephesians 4:26-17**).

We must understand the seriousness of what is involved. People say, "That is not fair." Have you ever said, "That is not fair?" Life is not fair. The world is not fair. The devil does not play fair. He has come to steal and kill and destroy.

God is more than fair. He is just. That means He knows the heart. He knows the motivation. He knows exactly what is going on in every person's life. God deals with us in truth, justice, love, and mercy. When God is showing something to us, it is for our good.

You may say, "Moses almost made it. He was right at the end of things." Yes, but God was concerned that he make it forever. If anybody is going to get a great crown when Jesus comes back, it is going to be Moses, a great man of God. He was a great man of faith. He was tolerant. He was the same man who when, God wanted to start all over and make him a new people, said, "No, Lord, remember your reputation." He was thinking more about God's reputation than he was about himself.

But he allowed the insanity of the moment to come. We are dealing with a serious thing. God caused the water to come out of the rock, but Moses had a character flaw in his own heart that the Lord held him responsible for - his unbelief. Yet he was a great man of faith. He had seen God do many, many incredible things, but he stepped out of that realm of the anointing and stepped into the flesh. That is where he got smacked. We have to receive some godly exhortation to walk the straight and narrow.

Why would God let the water come out? Because the people were thirsty? No, for His glory! Nonetheless God was going to make His servants look good, in spite of themselves. God dealt with Moses privately about this. Nobody else knew anything about it except him, Aaron, and God. That is the way it should be. You do not touch God's anointed ones. You do not judge God's servants and expect good things to happen in your life. God will deal with His servants.

Why is this so important? It takes faith to be tolerant. It takes faith, hope and love. If we start breaking down in faith, we are going to start breaking down in love, or breaking down in love will break down in faith and the hope. We may start to say that there is no hope, but there is nothing impossible with God. He can do it. We just need to stay in there and keep believing the Lord. That is why this is such a serious thing. We can start to get disobedient, not believing the Lord.

The issue was not what the people were doing to Moses. It had nothing to do with all of the people around him. You can not say, "They made him angry." No. The Lord told him, "Speak to the rock." He did not tell him to strike the rock. He told him to take the staff with him, but He did not tell him to strike the rock. He told him to speak to it.

This was something that was Moses' responsibility. Now why is this so serious? He was doing this in the Name of the Lord. When you are doing something in the Name of the Lord, you had better be right on. You had better be obedient to do what God said to do, in the way He said to do it. That is a holy thing! God cares for His people whether they are rebellious, independent, stubborn, bullheaded,

stiff-necked, and disobedient or not. He cares for His people. He loves His people.

The Lord told me again last night, He said, "Love my people. Care for my people, for I am coming soon." We need to be ready.

PART FIVE GOD'S PATIENCE

God's loving-kindness leads people to change. It causes people to turn from their own ways to God's ways. It causes them to be blessed. To be blessed you need to do things God's way.

The three qualities of the Lord in **Romans 2:4** help us come to a point where we decide we want to do what God says.

The three qualities are:

1. *God's goodness* God is always good to us even when we are not good to Him. He is always faithful. He is good to us all the time.
2. *God is tolerant* with us. The Lord does not condone and agree with many of the things that we are doing, believing, and thinking. However, He does not strike us down while we are in the process of changing. In other words, He has given us a free will to decide whether we are going to receive from Him. As He has said before, "I set before you blessing and cursing, life and death, choose life" (**Deuteronomy 30:19**).

God's desire is that we choose life and be blessed. If we choose other things, that is our choice. Just be willing to accept the consequences of your choice and the responsibility of your choice.

3. The third quality is *patience*.

These three qualities of God are part of His loving kindness that allows us to come into God's best. Have you found that you did not immediately do things that the Lord wanted? Over time have you changed your mind about some things? Did you have an attitude that needed some adjustment? It is God's loving kindness that leads us to change, turn around, and come into what He has for us.

He is a good God, and He cares about us. He loves us with an everlasting love. He has great plans for us, but He is waiting for us to make changes and to allow Him to make changes in us.

Sometimes we move from unbelief to belief. When we believe God, we do what God says. When we do not believe God, then we do not do what God says. The reason we do not do what God says is basically because we do not believe Him.

The Lord says, "I have a great plan for your life, a plan to prosper you, to give you hope and a future" **Jeremiah 29: 11-12**. If I believe that, I will say, "Okay, Lord, what is the plan and how do I need to get involved in it?" If you do not believe it, you will say, "Forget it! I will do it my way!" There are always people around you with plans, too. They have their plans, which are not God's plans.

Before we came to Jesus, we were doing our own thing. We were not seeking the Lord. Although the Lord loved us, Jesus died for us, and He had a great plan for our lives, we were not seeking God's ways.

Many people do not even know that God loves them and cares about them, and has a good plan for their lives. They have not even heard about that. Perhaps they have heard about church. Then they look at the people in church and the people are intolerant and not always doing what they profess to do. Just because people do not do things God's way, does not mean that the Lord is not good and caring. We have to point people to God's presence and start to get to know the Lord.

And they say, "I do not need that. I do not want to be one of those hypocrites." They do not understand that what people do has no bearing on the Lord. The Lord is good all the time. He always keeps His word. He always does everything with integrity. He is faithful. He is just and true. People are not always that way.

The Lord is tolerant. Many Christians are very intolerant. They are judgmental, critical and negative. Who wants to be a part of that? Have you ever been like that? You have opinions about everything. The Lord is not interested in our opinions about anything. He is only interested in His word and His truth.

Many Christians are not very patient, but God is patient, and we are developing that.

It is very important for us to understand that the Lord has been good, patient, and tolerant with us during the process of coming to know Him, receiving His love, and growing in obedience to Him. We need to be that way with each other as well. Allow the Lord to do the good work that He has begun in everyone.

When Jesus died at the cross, He died to save everybody and to give everybody abundant life. That is good news. People want to hear good news. They want to hear about hope, health, prosperity and abundant life. The power of death is broken and the Lord has given life forever through faith in Jesus Christ. Death was the barrier that held back all people from eternal life.

No matter what you did in this life, how much you acquired, how great your reputation, or what you accomplished, you always leave it to the next person, whether a wise person or a fool, when you die. In Jesus, you do not have that problem anymore. You just go on to what God has prepared.

Now in this process **II Peter 3** talks about the day of the Lord. I was just looking at some films about the end of times. The whole world is talking about what is going to happen. (The stage is set for the greatest revival of all time as the Lord brings things to culmination.) The whole world is thinking about the end times.

In Jesus, there is no end. There is life forever. The Lord has good news He wants people to see, hear, and participate in. They need to know that He is a loving, good God who has a provision for the end of this age; namely, life forever with Jesus. Whoever believes in the love God has demonstrated through Jesus Christ, though we die, yet shall we live. "He who lives and believes in me," Jesus said, "will never die" (**John 11**).

This is God's provision - Life. In **Revelation 21** we learn that in the Lord's new order there will be no more pain, sorrow, suffering, sickness, disease, death, or poverty that we have experienced in this world. Only good things and blessed things will be in God's new order. All we have to do is accept and believe that good news for life.

Nobody on the face of the earth does not want that good news, and God has allowed that good news to come to everybody. He wants that for everybody. He took the initiative because He loves us He sent Jesus for us that whoever believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be saved.

In **II Peter 3:3**: "First of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come. (And they are out there). Scoffing and following their own evil desires, they will say, "Where is this coming He promised?""

That statement was true then, and is true in some circles now. But if you will look around you, everybody in the entire population of the earth is thinking about the end of times. And the end time is at hand. It is time now for people to receive the good news of life forever!

II Peter 3 - "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these

waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed in the flood. And the flood came."

God's tolerance, patience, and goodness kept going out to the people, but they would not turn from their ways. They refused to turn and receive God's provision. So God had Noah make an ark out in the middle of the desert. There was going to be a time of judgement coming on the earth.

God's heart and desire is not to judge. Jesus came to save, not to judge and condemn the world. But the people judged themselves and condemned themselves when they did not accept the good news that God loved them and had given a provision for them in Jesus Christ.

All one has to do is accept Jesus Christ into one's heart and believe that He is the Lord. All that a person has to do is say, "Lord, I need you in my life. I acknowledge you, and I acknowledge your love provision." At that moment that he confesses with his mouth, "Jesus Christ is Lord" and believes in his heart that He has risen from the dead, that person will be saved. That is God provision."

But the people refused to listen to Noah, and sure enough, the time came. (There is an appointed end, and everybody is given opportunity to change his or her ways and turn to the Lord.)

God does not leave anybody out. The Lord does not want anybody to perish. He wants everybody to be saved. He wants everybody to have the life of God because He is a good God. Because of His goodness and tolerance He has not struck people down before they have had an opportunity to receive Him.

People put their lives in jeopardy by violating God's principles and doing things that do not cause blessing. The Lord said, "I set before you blessing and cursing, life and death, choose life." If people choose other than the life of God, then they choose cursing. They bring cursing upon themselves.

How many people have gone through days, nights, or years of suffering, pain, and problems because they chose to go a different way? The stress that fills their lives breaks their heart, mind, and family down.

The Lord says, "Come to me you who are weary and are heavy laden. I will give you rest. I will give you peace." He is calling out constantly, "Come to me, I will help you. Call upon me, and I will be there for you. I will deliver you and I will save you."

This is the Lord's goodness, love and tolerance. God's patience gives people time to change. However, there will come a point where people will have had more than enough opportunity and then the end will come. Then will come the judgement as happened in Noah's day.

"By the same Word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire. That day is coming, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men." Now understand, it is not God's desire that this judgement happen. The Lord wants everybody to be saved. He wants everybody to have life with Him, but the day is coming, if people do not receive God's lifeline in Jesus and accept that and start to seek to do what God says, they will be lost. This is not God's fault. It is very important that you understand this.

The Lord is a loving God. He is giving people opportunity and time to change, but the day will come when there will not be any more time to change, and we need to note that. That is why there is urgency to our message. People need to hear about the love of God. They need to know what God's plan is. They need to have opportunity to receive and accept that gospel, the good news.

"...But do not forget this one thing, dear friends, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day-**II Peter 3:8**. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. The Lord is quick to keep His promise."

Events are in a time frame. In **Ecclesiastes 3:11** it says the Lord makes all things beautiful in its time. What He is doing is giving people the opportunity to make a free will choice. The Lord always gives us the opportunity to make the free will choice. The thief wants to steal and kill and destroy, but Jesus says, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly (**John 10:10**).

Now, in Jesus, you have the freedom to choose life. God has said, "Here it is, all you need to do is accept it and start to walk in my ways." Just accept it. It is a free gift from God. Obey God because you have received His gift of love and believe Him. That is why you start to do what He says.

If you do not believe in somebody, you do not do what he or she says. It is the same thing with the Lord. If you do not believe in the Lord, you do not do what He says. You do not believe His Word is going to work. If you do believe, you do His word. You will see that it will work. It will happen.

God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. The Lord is patient with us. He gives us time to make the changes.

He wants that message presented like we are presenting it to you. He wants everybody to know that He loves him or her and has a good plan for their lives. He has a good plan and a purpose, and He wants to prosper your life. We need to hear that. We need to know the Lord loves us. When we believe that provision is available in Jesus Christ, that is the beginning. As Jesus said, "Except a man be born again of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. You have to be born again." You have to hear about that.

If someone says, "I can't go back and start all over," He needs to know Jesus was not talking about physical things. He was talking in the spirit about spiritual things. You cannot go back into your mother's womb. You need to start over in Jesus. Believe in Jesus. When you believe in Jesus, you become born again. The life of God comes within you. Just say, "Jesus Christ, come into my heart, be my Lord and my savior." At that moment, you turn from yourself. "Lord, I ask your forgiveness for my old life, my selfish life, seeking my own way to do my own thing. Now I turn to you. I receive your gift of love. I want to walk in your ways. I am born again into the life of God."

The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. The Lord is putting out faith toward us that we are going to change. When Jesus died on the cross, the provision was made to save everybody. He is not going to die again. It was done once and for all. Whoever looks to Jesus and believes on Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life. Salvation is provided. It is free for us.

The Lord through faith is patient. We also have faith, hope, and love. The Lord says, the greatest is love. Why? Because God first loved us. That is why we have a reason for faith, hope, and love. That is why we are able to have those qualities.

The Lord sends that faith, hope, and love toward us daily. God is directing His love toward us daily, and He wants to do good things for us. He is actually thinking up good things to do for His children. He believes that we are going to accept His gift. Without a gift being presented, you do not have an opportunity to accept it. You do not have an opportunity to receive it. The Lord has already presented the gift. All you have to do is accept it and receive it.

He is patient towards us in that He is not forcing us to do anything. Patience is a quality that God's people really need to grasp. Through faith and patience we will

be able to inherit all things that God has promised and blessed - if we do not doubt that it has been given. We accept that in time we will see it all come to pass.

If you know you have something, you do not get impatient, do you? You get impatient when you don't know you have it. That is why they put windows in ovens. People kept opening up the oven before the time, and the cake would fall.

We need to understand that when God says something, He means just what He says. It is all going to come to pass in His due season. He is going to make everything beautiful. We need to keep faith and trust in Him in the same way the Lord keeps faith and trust in us. In His time we are going to accept and come into what He has provided and promised for us. We need to hear what God's plan is because then we will desire it. If you do not know about something, you can not very well want it.

When you know the Lord, then you want the Lord. Then all the good things are made available from the Lord. In His good time He makes all things beautiful. It is His patience that is working. He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

"...But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." No one is going to know when it is to come. Therefore, you do not want to wait to make a decision. You want to make that decision now. Today is the day of salvation. Do not wait around. When you hear His voice, respond, answer, and accept it.

Jesus said, "I come quickly." Therefore be ready. Receive that truth. Accept that truth. Anticipate that truth. You do not know when it is going to happen, but you know that it is going to happen. You need to be found ready when it does. You do not want to get into disobedience. You want to open your heart to the things of God. You want to know what God says, and to do what God says. You do not want to defer it. You do not want to delay it.

It is like the man that built the big barns, filled them up with all kinds of stuff, sat back and thought, "I am going to retire now and everything is going to be wonderful." The Lord came to him and said "Thou fool, tonight your soul is required of you. Woe to the man who is rich in this world but is not rich towards God."

All of a sudden you may not have the opportunity. People may think, "I have plenty of time." No. You do not have plenty of time for this decision. We need to make this decision today. Today you need to say, "Lord, forgive me, come into my

life, order my steps, direct my path. I believe you. I believe you for abundant life now as well as eternal life forever, and I am going to do it your way, Lord." You can make that choice.

"...Because the heavens will disappear with a roar, and the elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. And that day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire. The elements will melt in the heat, but in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness forever that the Lord has promised to us who believe Him and call upon Him" **I Peter 3.**

The Lord wants everybody there. He does not want anybody missing out.

Every time we are impatient, we are not acting like the Lord. (The Lord knows what is going to be.) You need to know confidently that your life is in God's hands, and if you give somebody to the Lord, they are in God's hands as well. He is patiently and tolerantly working out His goodness in each and every one of us.

Paul said to the people at Philippi, "For I am confident of this very thing. That the good work, which God has begun in you, He is faithful to perfect and to complete." God is faithful to perfect and to complete it. And that is where our confidence is.

We may look at a person and think, "God, they will never change." You may say, "Lord, please make them change," and "God, they will never change" in the next breath. Trust in the Lord that He is taking those you have committed to Him. We know the Lord has a good plan for their lives, but are we confident that He is doing a good thing? We quickly try to do something or say something to pressure them into doing what will bless them. Usually when people hear that, they do just the opposite. Why? Because we are bugging them. This is how we drive them away! The Lord on the other hand always acknowledges a person's free will choice.

God's plan should be so good that people want it. If we are presenting how good it is, eventually they are going to want it. In the Lord there are only good things. Only good things come down from the Father of lights. Only great things come from the Lord.

When we keep pressuring people, our impatience is working. It is our mistrust that the Lord has begun a good work. When did He begin the good work? When we

asked Him to do the good work. When did we ask Him to begin the good work? It was when we believed God and said, "Lord, you begin the good work in me. You begin the good work in somebody else. Do your good work in Jesus Name. Love your people Lord."

Sometimes you get impatient with yourself. Sometimes you get impatient with others. When you try to hurry something up, then you bring pressure that is not necessary. We need to give God time to work.

Diamonds are developed through pressure, but it is pressure over centuries. If you were to take that diamond and smack it, what would you have? A mess.

Do you like to be pressured? I have heard people say, "Pastor, I did not like what you were talking about the other day." This does not bother me because I just say what the Lord gives me to say. (I am not into pleasing people.) But this I know, the Lord would not have me say something if it was not necessary for somebody to hear.

The Lord does keep moving us. The Holy Spirit is moving us along. He does not just sit back and say nothing. If He did not love us, He would just sit back and say nothing.

According to God's Word, when a parent does not discipline his child, he allows his child to go to hell. Discipline is pressure. A young child needs to be shaped. He needs to be trained. Just like a young tree needs to be trained in the way it should go. If you do not give it direction, it is going to go any way it wants. Eventually it will be unprofitable. The orchard people chop those trees down, and they start over. Those untrained trees are unprofitable, having grown every which way.

In the same way, God's people are very special. They are beyond price. You can not put a price tag on people. Whether they are a believer or an unbeliever. They are all the Lord's. He saved all of us. He desires every one of us to come into good things.

The Lord does not want us getting in the way of what He is doing with people. He just wants us displaying His goodness, His tolerance, and His patience with people and with ourselves. Know that the Lord is doing a good work in us whether we feel like it or not. He is working. All we need to do is to allow that loving kindness, which is undeserved, to start to shape and change us. People will come

to their senses and realize what they are doing is not working. We all need the Lord.

Many people are doing very well as far as the world is concerned. They are making mucho bucks, driving nice cars, living in nice homes. They seem to have it together. But there is one thing facing all people - DEATH. There is no way around it. You can tuck this, and lift that but death faces all people. The only way to overcome death is through faith in Jesus Christ.

People say, "I do not believe that." That is okay. Understand that it is okay if people do not want to believe that. It is their choice. Someday they are going to stand before God. It is going to be their choice not to be with Him. It was not God's choice. Maybe it was not your choice. You want them to be with Him, but that is their choice.

You cannot make them do it. This is very important. But I know this, if you keep pushing somebody in a certain direction, they are going to go the other way. Then the day will come (if you gave them to God, and you are believing God for them, and you are treating them with the goodness of God) that God is going to get through to them.

With man it is impossible, but with God nothing is impossible. That is why Paul said, "I did not come with convincing words to people, I came with the demonstration of the Spirit and power." That will change things. You will see that God means business. He will heal the sick. Yes, He will mend the broken hearted. Yes, He can take that person whose life has been devastated by relationships, hurts, wounds, and abuse and He can turn it around like nothing ever happened. They can get on with their lives and experience good things rather than all of the hard things that they had. That is demonstration of the Spirit and power.

The Lord means business. Whoever calls on Him, He will not leave empty. He is going to help them and stand with them. He is the only real thing in this life. You do not see Him, but you see the demonstration of His presence. It is like not seeing electricity, but it is here. You know the lights are on.

Do you need an adjustment in regard to patience? You have to be patient. Do not go by what you see or what you hear. Thank God He does not go by what He sees or hears. He is believing for good things at the end of the road. When the dust settles, you will be standing at the place of blessing.

Do you remember where you came from? Where you are today is because of God's goodness. That is what you want to think about, and what you want for others. Allow that patience to work with others as well.

It is not that you cannot say anything, but just say it once. Make sure they understand. With a little child you look at them eyeball to eyeball and make sure that they discern your spirit. Do not talk to them if they are not looking at you. Otherwise, you do not have their attention. You need to get their attention and make it clear. Then you know they got it. What I do is ask the person to repeat what he understood I just said. I know they got it if they say it back to me, not just mimic it.

When they understand it, then it is their choice, and they must be willing to accept the consequences of the choice. "Today I set before you blessing, cursing, life and death, choose life." Understand there are consequences to cursing. If that is what you want to have, then continue on that path, for life or for death. That is how it works.

Something that always amazed me is the prodigal son story. The son came to his dad and said, "Give me my inheritance." Where I come from that is totally rude. To go and demand the inheritance is just uncalled for and unheard of, but the father gave it to him. The father had the inheritance for him.

The father understood something about God. Actually the father in the story is the Lord. He gave that boy his inheritance. It was his to use as he would. He went out and squandered it on all kinds of things. (But in his mind it was not squandering. He was just doing what he wanted to do. Right? In somebody else's eyes he was squandering.)

He spent his inheritance on stuff with no return. (It was not God-things that he spent his money on.) A few years went by and the money ran out. Then he had to try to do things on his own. He ended up feeding the hogs, which to a Jew was the lowest of the low. All of a sudden he came to his senses and realized that even the servants in his father's house had it better than he had it out there. He decided that he was going to go home and humble himself and say, "Dad, you do not have to take me in, but if you desire, make me a servant." He had come to his senses. This is called repentance. It is called changing, turning from yourself and turning to God.

So he went home and his father accepted him. This was his son, and he loved his son. He loved his son while he was in the house. He loved his son when his son

got rebellious. He loved his son when his son returned. What always amazes me is why that father gave the boy his inheritance? I really did not understand. It is the same way God causes the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust.

When the boy came home the brother said, "You gave him a ring. You put it on his finger. You gave him a new set of clothes. You threw a big party for him. I have been here faithful all of this time and you never did any of that for me." Have you ever had that attitude before? "I'm doing what God says to do. Why should that person over there get blessed? They are not doing what God says to do. Why should they get anything?"

The daddy looked at his son and said, "Son, all that I have is yours." Your brother, is not a runaway anymore. He is restored and he has had his blessing. His blessing now is to be part of the family, part of the kingdom. But he has already used up all of the other stuff. All of the rest belongs to you." He said, "Shouldn't we be happy? Shouldn't we be glad and excited that this boy who was lost is found? Shouldn't we throw a party? Shouldn't we be rejoicing? In other words, get your attitude straight. Let's show a little goodness and tolerance and patience."

I have had the thought that the other brother did not really want his brother to come home anymore. That he was a shame to the family. And he did not want him around. He was no good. However, that is not the heart of God. Why would the father give him the inheritance? Because it was his! The father, in His love and goodness, had prepared it for his son to give it to him.

Should not the father have directed how the boy was going to use it? No. He gave it to his son. It was his sons' inheritance. Somewhere along the line people have to grow up and become responsible for their choices. They have to understand the consequences of their choices. The father did not give him any more inheritance because he used everything that he had.

Why didn't he give him more? Because he received and used up what was his.

The Lord wants us to learn to be responsible, accountable, and committed, and be willing to accept the consequences of our choices for life or for death. That is love.

Why did the father even give it to him? The father loved this boy. If he was going to use it like that he could have ended up with a lot of problems.

A man once came to me and said, "Pastor, I have been praying that God not give me too much. Then I might have to be responsible for much." That was what he chose because he did not want responsibility. The Lord says if we are faithful (responsible) with little, He will give more.

Another person came to me and said, "Pastor, you do not listen." I looked at him and said, "It isn't that I don't listen. I understand everything you have said. I do not agree with you."

Do you understand the difference? Some people think that if you listen to them, then you'll do what they say.

The Lord does not agree with many things that we do, say and think. Many people ask God selfish nonsense. The Lord doesn't even hear that stuff? He only hears what we are asking in faith, according to His will. All of that other is nonsense. It sounds like chatter.

The Lord is waiting for us to ask something in faith according to His will. What is His will? - His Word. When you do that, He has already got it ready. Then there is a time to release it. God has things coming to us that we don't even know about. If we would just praise, worship, and love Him, all of it would come. No strings attached. When strings are attached, that is control. God is never into control. He just says, "I set before you blessing, cursing, life, death, choose life."

When my children were younger, we chose three options or three opportunities for them. They were all good choices. They would pick which one they wanted. Then we would go with that choice. That is a Godly control that is led of the Spirit. (He will never lead you into evil.)

Patience says even though somebody may be heading away from things that are blessed, it is just a matter of time before he comes back. I believe God is working in that person, and I believe in that person. He will come to his senses and turn around.

In the scripture above the daddy was expecting his son back. He knew it was just a matter of time. Why? Because the boy had experienced the goodness, tolerance, and patience of a loving father. He came to his senses, but he had not even thought about home until he was done with what he was doing. He did not even think about what he had left behind until he came to the end of himself. Then he thought about how even the servants in his daddy's house had it better than he did. His dad was so good even the servants in his house were blessed.

That is the love of God. The goodness of God draws us back. Once you have had a taste of the goodness of God, you want more. Sometimes you get distracted and you go out on your own, but you always remember that God had shown goodness and love to you.

This is one of the amazing things I hear from people who have gone away from the Lord as out of the church. They say, "Pastor, I started thinking about how the finest moments of my life were when I was there in church." When things go really well, sometimes people drift. They get out there, but before long the thought comes, "Something is missing." They start thinking about the Lord. Then they come back.

Maybe at first they peek in. They are received with goodness, tolerance and patience like nothing ever happened. That is how the Lord looks at us. The daddy did not say, "Son, what were you doing all these years?" No. He was just so happy to see him that he accepted him back without any questions asked. He knew his boy was lost, and that his boy now was found. That was all that mattered.

He placed the ring of sonship on him again. (The boy had probably pawned his ring. That is why the dad had to do something.) He put new clothes on him. When the boy had left home, he went out with good stuff. When he came back, he had lost everything.

The dad threw a big celebration party. "Let us rejoice and be glad. He was lost and now is found."

The Lord takes pleasure in the return of the backslider. The loving dad took pleasure in his son returning. We as God's people should take pleasure in people coming back to the Lord. The angels are dancing, and rejoicing. God's people should be dancing and rejoicing.

Intolerant people have a problem with that. Impatient people have a problem with that. People who are self-righteous have a problem with that. They forget that they were once enemies of God, but God's loving kindness, goodness, tolerance, and patience changed them.

When some people have different belief systems than you, you have to be wise in the Lord about them.

In one case some people I knew did not wear jewelry. They had fancy houses, and cars, and all kinds of other things, but they did not wear jewelry. We were having a good time about it because to me there is no difference between a fancy house and jewelry. As I was talking to the person about different things, I had jewelry on and I waved my hand. I was just playing around, having fun, and then the person next to me was laughing because he saw what I was doing. I then said, "You know when the prodigal son came back, the father gave him a ring of sonship." And the person laughed.

You see, God will give you favor with people. So you can be tolerant with them. You can love people. (Everybody is at different places and doing different things in their lives.) You can have fun. The person above laughed and said, "Yeah, we haven't gotten past the other brother yet." That was the Spirit of God talking.

Sometimes people cut others off. God is bigger than that. Some things that we make such a big deal out of, the Lord thinks are insignificant, petty nonsense. If it is not an issue of life and blessing, lighten up in the Lord.

We know that outward adorning is not what makes a person beautiful anyway. It is in the heart and in the mind. However, some people need a coat of paint. (And that is not a bad thing.) You want to look your best in the Lord.

My ring was a gift from my wife. The bible says, "Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights." Because I like gifts and love to give gifts, Christmas is all year round to me. My Father loves to give gifts too. It is the heart of God to give.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him (Jesus) will not perish but will have everlasting life (John 3:16).

