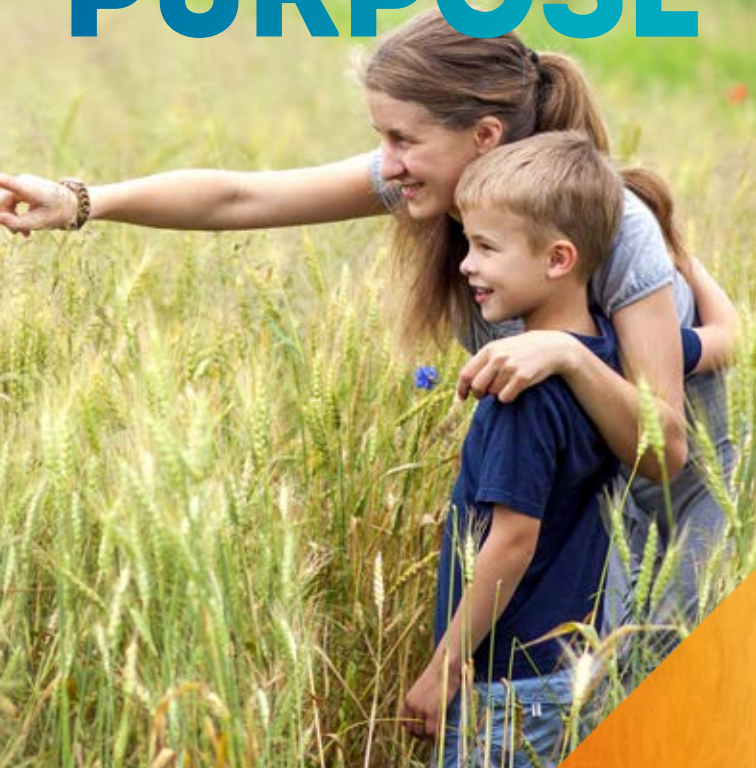


God's Unlimited Promises to Hold On To

UNLIMITED PURPOSE



GNU WORD
SPREADS
FAST.
Good News Unlimited

DEVOTIONAL

FROM ELIEZER TO YOU

Dear Friend

Welcome to this edition of GNU's devotional, Unlimited. These bi-monthly booklets are intended to help you receive and hold on to God's precious promises for your life. Throughout these short devotional readings, you'll find spiritual teaching, opportunities to reflect, and practical insights on how you can serve others.

The theme of this edition is "Unlimited Purpose." This devotional focuses on God's purpose for your life. I'm praying that it will help you discover it and be strong in your walk.

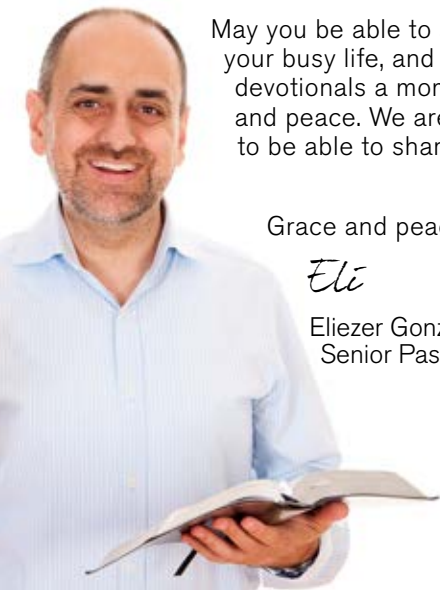
We're already working on the next edition, which will be about that "Unlimited Life" that God has prepared for you.

May you be able to stop in the midst of your busy life, and find in these little devotionals a moment of blessing and peace. We are certainly blessed to be able to share them with you.

Grace and peace,

Eli

Eliezer Gonzalez
Senior Pastor, GNU



UNLIMITED PURPOSE

God's Unlimited Promises to Hold On To

CALVARY IS THE TRUE CENTRE OF EXISTENCE

All that we do that is good
is but an echo of God's own good.

We love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:19, NIV).

It is not the life of Christ, not the teachings of Christ, but his sacrificial death alone that provides the motivation we need in our Christian life. When, through faith, we focus our eyes upon Christ on the terrible tree, and lay hold of him as our personal Redeemer, we become united with the very power of the heavenly throne itself.

To know that we are loved, despite what we are, inclines us to love others despite what they are. To see the evidence of the patience of God towards us inspires us to be patient with those around us.

To catch a glimpse of the hope of Paradise offered to a penitent thief arouses in us an undying hope which can transcend "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

The Cross is a constant reminder to us that we, too, died on that day, and that we are now Christ's; and the only life that we have is the one he has given us.

Jesus' death teaches us that we are not our own, for we were bought with a price. When we truly realise this great truth, we no longer want to live for ourselves, but for him who for our sake died and was raised again. All that we do that is good is but an echo of God's own good.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Think carefully about what is truly the centre of your existence. Is it your community, your friends, your work, your church? What would your life look like if you acknowledged Calvary as the centre of your existence?*

LIVE IN THE PRESENT

Because of the Cross,
every moment of your life can be pregnant
with wonderful opportunity, meaningful purpose,
and boundless joy.

Whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:26, NIV).

The actress Mary McDonnell has said, “We have to get back to the beauty of just being alive in this present moment.” There’s a lot of wisdom in that.

Too many people live in the past – a past of disappointment and broken dreams.

It is our nature to dwell on the hurts of the past. And it is also the nature of popular culture to push us towards a future that we know is just an illusion.

To try to exist in the present with no notion of the goodness of the past or the goodness of the future is simply too bleak to contemplate. We can only “get back to the beauty of just being alive in this present moment” when we are able to find goodness in the past and goodness in the future.

It is because of the good thing that God has done in the past through Christ at Calvary, that a good future is assured for all who love Him. For that reason, because of the Cross, every hour, every minute, every second, of every day can be pregnant with wonderful opportunity, meaningful purpose, and boundless joy.

When you discover Jesus, you discover life – not life in the past, not life in the future, but life right now.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli’s Reflection: *There are many people who are waiting for some future time to be happy and to truly live. Are you one of them? Ask your Heavenly Father to help you see his goodness to you in your past and in your present.*

THE ETERNAL GOD IS YOUR HELPER

I bought you with my blood. I have died for you;
and if I have done these great things,
why wouldn't I do smaller things for you?

I will help you, says the Lord (Isaiah 41:14, NKJV).

Today let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us: "I will help you," he says.

Here are some of the other things he will say to us when we listen to him through his word:

"It is easy for me, your God, to help you. Consider what I have done already..."

Why, I bought you with my blood. I have died for you; and if I have done these great things, why wouldn't I do smaller things for you? I can do so much for you, and I will do even more.

Before the world began, I chose you. I made the covenant for you. I laid aside my glory and became a man for you; I gave up my life for you; and if I did all this, I will surely help you now... Do you need more strength than the omnipotence of God? Do you want more wisdom than exists in God the Father, more love than his Son has showed to us, or more power than the Holy Spirit has to work in your life?..."

Bring everything to God—your sadness and loneliness, your troubles, your needs. See how full God's river of blessing is for you, so full that you don't need anything else. You can be strong in God, because he is your helper!

▼ **CHARLES SPURGEON (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *Spend some time with the Lord today and just praise him from your heart that all the resources of omnipotence have been put at your disposal, through the grace of Christ.*

NAKED BEFORE GOD

In Christ, you will never be naked and exposed.

All of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27, NIV).

Some people have nightmares about being caught out naked. It's one of our greatest fears. Those who tell us there is a psychological meaning to these dreams say that they represent feelings of being vulnerable, and a fear of having an aspect of your life totally exposed.

Biblically, they are not far off the mark. The question that God asked Adam and Eve after they sinned was,

Who told you that you were naked? (Genesis 3:11).

The implication of God's question is that no-one told them, so how did they know?

They had done something, and as a result they felt ashamed. Their guilt exposed them before God. Sin had come into the world and into the human heart.

We are all naked before God. For many, this sense of nakedness is simply reflected in a yearning for something more—for identity—for permanence. Others who know God know this restlessness for what it is: the presence of sin.

The Apostle Paul gives us the solution when he tells us that if we have been baptised, we have been clothed with Christ. What was lost by our first parents has been re-gained by Jesus. Our spotless righteousness, pristine purity, and absolute perfection exists only in him. In Christ, you will never be naked and exposed.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *How would you answer the question in Genesis 3:11? As a child of God, what answer would you give? Are there things in your life that make you feel naked before God?*

BELIEVE YOUR BELIEFS AND DOUBT YOUR DOUBTS

**Never let what you don't understand
destroy what you do understand.**

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24, NKJV).

If my brain is the result of the play of meaningless atoms in time and space, I have no grounds to trust its conclusions.

From where did thought come? If thought matches reality, there had to be an infinite and wise Creator who gave us consciousness. But if our thoughts are the result of chance then we should no more trust their conclusions than we should expect the splash of an accidental jug spilling to give us a map of Australia.

If the Bible's picture of a loving heavenly Father is only a myth, and life is meaningless, we could never come to the point of understanding sorrow.

We would never know darkness unless we first knew light. Suppose there was no light and we had no eyes, then the word 'dark' would have no meaning. It is because we know the reality of God and good that we feel the intensity of darkness and pain. The One who made the world made your brain and your standard of what is right and good. Every accusation against God is built on a standard, and our standard came from him who made us.

Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts. Never doubt your beliefs and believe your doubts. Never let what you don't understand destroy what you do understand.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *These are pretty challenging ideas. We don't like to think of pain as a teacher, that it might have some benefits. What have you learnt by going through the most difficult times in your life? Make a list, and share it with someone you trust.*

Letter from India...

GOD SUPPLIES ABUNDANTLY

GNU's brothers and sisters in India are praising God for the work he continues to do for them. In the village of Moturu, a Good News Prayer Hall is being constructed as a direct result of your generosity. It's another inspiring story emerging from the great need for the Gospel in this country.

GNU's Pastor Joseph first began preaching the Gospel in Moturu almost five years ago. Poverty and alcoholism dominated this village. In the spirit of the Gospel, Pastor Joseph and his wife offered physical as well as spiritual food to the needy villagers. Recently they have established a regular medical clinic in the village, thanks to Dr Audithys, a hospital superintendent who was so moved by the work being done in the name of Jesus that he decided to halve his working hours so he can volunteer his time to the Gospel and the GNU team.

Gradually more people have seen their lives transformed as they have accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who can watch the weekly GNU TV programme, and they gather wherever they can to listen to the gospel when Pastor Joseph visits. They have prayed for a building where they could worship regularly, and to which they could invite others, who have still to learn about the Gospel.

Finally has come the exciting news that Pastor Joseph has been able to secure land for long-term rental. And just at the right time, God has provided the means of building a prayer hall.

Pastor Joseph takes up the story:

In three different villages there are three brothers named Narishimama, Nayadu and Suresh, who all work as



▼ GNU's Pastor Joseph with the three brothers who are building the Prayer Hall in Moturu: *"We have a great desire for the Good News to be spread around the villages through this Prayer Hall,"* they say.

carpenters, building sheds and houses. They were Hindus, but through seeing the GNU TV programme, they came to know about Jesus and their lives have been changed.

They contacted me and I told them about the work we have been doing. I also spoke to them about my dream for a Prayer Hall in Moturu. They were happy and excited, because this was a project where they could do something practical for Jesus and the Gospel. They have started work on the construction, and have already completed the foundations and the roof.

When it is completed, the Prayer Hall in Moturu will be a focal point for the preaching of the Gospel in that part of India. And so, with your help, more people will have their despair swallowed up in the joy of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Thank God that he provides the means to spread the Gospel where the need is greatest, and for dedicated new Christians such as Narishimama, Nayadu and Suresh. Thank him also that he offers you the opportunity to be part of his great Gospel outreach.*

GOD TURNS EVIL INTO EVENTUAL GOOD

**At the Cross, the crown of thorns
becomes a crown of glory.**

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good
(Genesis 50:20, NIV)..*

There is a wonderful significance in that suffering always brings fruit. It always either makes us bitter or better. It either sours us or sanctifies us. Everything has two handles. Ultimate happiness depends on which handle we take hold of. Will our problems make us bitter or better?

Suffering will come; there is no way of dodging it. It is good to remember that constant sunshine makes a desert. It is people in prosperity that most easily lose Christ, not people in adversity.

For every one person who gives up Christ under the pressures of pain, trouble and sorrow, there are a dozen that lose him because of success and wealth and ease.

Constantly in the Bible, the story is that God takes evil and turns it into good. At the Cross, glory comes out of apparent defeat and loss. Christ's torn flesh becomes a glorified body. The crown of thorns becomes a crown of glory. The crucified malefactor becomes the redeemer of the world. Good Friday gives way to Resurrection Sunday, and the greatest tragedy the world has ever known becomes the glory of the world.

Right through the Bible you find that all the evil under the mystic alchemy of God becomes good. The mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceedingly fine.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *If it is true that "for every one person who gives up Christ under the pressures of pain, trouble, and sorrow, there are a dozen that lose him because of success and wealth and ease," then which is the worse tragedy? What do you ask for when you pray?*

WORRY REPLACEMENT THERAPY¹¹

God's therapy for stress management
is to replace worry with prayer.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done (Phillipians 4:6).

Have you heard of "Worry Replacement Therapy?" (WRT). It's God's solution to worry and anxiety!

Worry is a habit – a pattern of mental thinking that we fall into and that becomes hard-wired in our brains. The way to deal with it is to replace it.

God's therapy for stress management is to replace worry with prayer. Every time we start worrying we need to start praying. Notice that the therapy works when we pray about everything. As soon as we start worrying about anything – no matter how small a thing it may be – we must start praying. That's how we start to rewire our brains with faith.

But notice what kind of prayer we should pray. It is a prayer that presents God with our request, and which at the same time thanks him for all he has done.

This isn't a "misery prayer" where we moan and groan and remind God about how miserable we are. It is gratitude filled prayer. It is praise filled prayer. It is joyfully expectant prayer.

When we start to practice God's Worry Replacement Therapy, our brains will soon start loving the new thoughts that will flow into it from up above – thoughts of a reality that will transform our lives.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Plan to start your Worry Replacement Therapy today. Can you plan something simple for when worrying thoughts come to you, to instantly replace them with a prayer? Is it a little prayer you can carry with you, a prayer to sing, or a simple prayer you can memorise?*

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

There is no way to holiness except through hell.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:2, NKJV).

The testimony of Scripture is that all things work together for good to those who love God. We have a Christ who gathers up the fragments so that nothing is lost. Without suffering there would be no sympathy; without hardship there would be no hardihood; without pain there would be no patience. There is no way to holiness except through hell.

There are two ways to react to the troubles of life. Jacob said, *"All these things are against me"* (Genesis 42:36). But Joseph said, *"You meant it for evil but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 50:20).

Paul can say, year after year, after being shipwrecked, stoned, beaten with rods, meeting with false brethren, enduring a thorn in the flesh year after year, he said,

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present or things to come, nor principalities or powers, nor any other created thing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ, Jesus, our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).

We've got to learn to dance Adam's dance backward. He disbelieved the word of God and disobeyed; but we have to learn to believe the word of God and obey.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Which of the two ways Des describes is your natural reaction to life's troubles: to believe everything is against you, or to think that God can turn something that was meant to harm you into a blessing? How can you have a more fulfilling life by turning your thought patterns around?*

WHEN IT COMES TO SALVATION, TO WORK FOR IT IS TO LOSE IT.

We can't afford to chop the wood
that God has already chopped,
lest we ourselves become the kindling for the fire.

If you are thirsty, come and drink water! If you don't have any money, come, eat what you want! Drink wine and milk without paying a cent (Isaiah 55:1, CEV).

I saw a strange thing while camping by the beach during the summer holidays. Some of the other men who were camping with their families brought axes. They would get wood from the woodpile, and then cut the pieces laboriously into smaller pieces of wood to start their fires.

I couldn't understand this because the woodpile already contained wood of every size – from bigger pieces to tinder. The work had already been done. The only reason why I could think that men would laboriously chop wood was to exercise their manliness in proving to themselves that they hadn't lost their skills for survival in the wild!

It is the same with life and salvation. We work all our lives to prove that we are worthy. Why work for what has already been so freely provided. To prove our merits? To prove that we can do it on our own?

At the end of the day, if it feels good, let the men swing their axes and chop wood. It may have some therapeutic value.

When it comes to salvation, to work for it is to lose it. We can't afford to chop the wood that God has already chopped, lest we ourselves become the kindling for the fire.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Ask God to examine your heart to remove the attitudes and behaviours that are about making ourselves feel worthy before God (as well as ourselves and our fellow human beings). We all have them, and we all need God's help.*

LET YOUR PRAYERS BE ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

[Even] our Lord Jesus Christ himself did not pray except in accordance with the Word, even though his life was at stake.

Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us (1 John 5:14, NIV).

It is prayer when it is within the compass of God's Word; and it is blasphemy, or at best vain babbling, when the petition is for things outside of God's Holy Book. David, when he prayed, kept his eye on the Word of God, *"I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word"* (Psalm 119:25). And again, *"My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word"* (Psalm 119:28).

Surely the Holy Spirit does not immediately stir up the heart of the Christian without the Word of God; rather it is the Word that motivates a person to go to the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself did not pray except in accordance with the Word, even though his life was at stake. He said, *"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"* (Matthew 26:53–54).

Jesus was saying, "If there was just one word for it in the scriptures, I would soon be out of the hands of my enemies. Angels would come to help me. But the scripture does not warrant this kind of praying."

▼ **JOHN BUNYAN (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *To pray in accordance with the Word, you must know the Word. Are you involved in a regular plan for Bible study? Why don't you start one with some friends?*

LIVE BIG!

The biggest life of all that we can live is the one that produces fruit for the kingdom.

“Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown (Matthew 13:8, NIV).

Some people want to live big! They want to make an impact on this world! They want to make sure that their lives are not forgotten within a generation of their passing. But they go about it the wrong way.

Jesus told us how to live big in the parable of the sower. If we truly want to multiply our lives many times over, we need to be like the good soil. The meaning of the numbers in this verse is that they are all multiples of three (the number of God) and ten (the number that refers to the completeness on this earth). In other words, these numbers mean that whatever is the harvest of your life, it will be entirely the work of God.

We need to be responsive to the movement of the Spirit of God in our lives. We need to receive the water of salvation. We need to bask in the Sun of Righteousness, who is Jesus Christ. Then we will produce a good crop in our lives – a gospel harvest.

The biggest life of all that we can live is the one the produces fruit for the kingdom. That kind of life is never wasted. Of those people, Christ says that they,

will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43).

Now that is really living big!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Go to a place that is special for you—a place of peace and reflection—and praise the Lord that all your dreams will be fulfilled, and even exceeded, in his kingdom. Then ask him to make you good soil for the Gospel seeds that he wants to sow in your life.*

GOD GIVES MEANING TO EVERYTHING

If you take God away,
you have annihilated everything
that is good in the universe.

“You believe in God; believe also in me (John 14:1b, NIV).

The main reason for unbelief ultimately, is that people only believe what they wish to believe. After all, a small eyelid can shut out the entire sun.

William Paley, a great favourite of mine, said: If you walked in a desert and your foot kicked a stone, you wouldn't think about it. But if you kicked a watch, you would get down and look at it. And you would marvel at it: the hard case to protect it, the glass so you could see, the proportionate moving of the hands. And when you took the back off and you saw the delicate mechanism and wheels and spring, you would say, "What a wonderful thing!" Then what if, as you hold it in your hands, suddenly another watch springs out? You pick up the second watch and you look at it, and suddenly yet another one comes out.

Paley is arguing two things: Design and Fertility. The watch is not like a stone. It is designed. And in his illustration, it is fertile. The watch, of course, is a symbol of us. Why isn't everything in nature sterile?

Without God, nothing has meaning. If you take God away, you have annihilated everything that is good in the universe, every elevated joy of the mind, and every uplifting and ennobling love.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Have you found it true that "some people only believe what they want to believe?" Do you know someone who refuses to believe in Jesus in spite of the evidence? Ask the Lord to specifically show you how you can help that person.*

AN UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

There is no way to answer the question of the meaning of life unless you include God.

Only fools say in their hearts, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1, NLT).

I learnt a lesson about the meaning of life some years ago—from a man with a can. In fact, it was from a young man with an aerosol can.

I was doing some casual teaching in a state high school when I met a senior student there who had his arm in a sling, really badly cropped hair, and terrible scars on his face. I asked him what had happened. He told me that he had set his hair alight with a cigarette lighter and an aerosol can.

I didn't believe him—how could someone do that to themselves—but he quickly took out his cell phone and showed me some photos he had taken of himself in the act.

The broken arm was from punching trees. “Well,” he said, “it's less complicated than punching people!”

And so I asked him why. He said, “Because life has no meaning. All you can do is get out there and experience as much as you can.”

I didn't agree with his philosophy, but I couldn't fault his logic.

The question, “What is the meaning of life?” is asked by many, and answered by few. Why? Because the question itself is meaningless. There is no way to answer the question of the meaning of life unless you include God.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Do you know someone who has come to believe that life is meaningless? Set aside some time this week specifically to pray for that person, and so that the Lord will show you how you can be a help to that person.*

PERSIST IN PRAYER

There is nothing that prevails more with God than persistence.

I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs (Luke 11:8, NKJV).

That scripture in Luke 11:8 is very encouraging to any poor soul that hungers after Christ Jesus. In verses 5-7, Jesus tells a parable of a man who went to his friend to borrow three loaves of bread, but because his friend was in bed he denied his request. Yet the man who needed the bread kept knocking, and finally his friend got up and gave him what he wanted.

The parable reminds us that even if your faith is weak, even if you are uncertain whether you are a friend of God and whether he loves you, yet you should never stop asking, seeking, and knocking at God's door for mercy.

Perhaps you feel that God will not pay attention to you, that you are not his friend, but rather his enemy in your heart because of your wicked deeds (Colossians 1:21). And you may think you can hear the Lord saying to you, "Don't bother me. I can't give you anything"; yet I say, continue knocking, crying, and asking.

As in the parable, I tell you, "... because of your boldness [in your persistence] he will get up and give you as much as you need." And truly, my own experience tells me, that there is nothing that prevails more with God than persistence.

▼ **JOHN BUNYAN (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *Is there something that you once asked the Lord for, and for which you have now stopped praying for? If it was something good that you were asking for, then make a decision today to renew your prayers before God.*

THE TWO TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY

Only the Christian revelation as it is found in Scripture can rightly answer the question of “What is man?”

What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? (Psalm 8:4, NLT).

All our questions about the universe and existence involve the prior question of “What is man?” Who or what is this being that asks the questions?

Only the Christian revelation as it is found in Scripture can rightly answer the question. It repudiates the two characteristic positions of the ages, naive optimism and cynical pessimism. Creation and the Fall as recorded in Genesis are the only adequate explanation of the nature of man. Man, made in the moral image of God, by disobedience has become a hybrid: half-angel, half-demon.

The Christian religion, then, teaches these two truths: that there is a God whom we can know, and that there is a corruption in our nature that makes us unworthy of him. The gospel revolves around these truths.

It is important for us to know both of these truths. It is equally dangerous for us to know God without knowing our own wretchedness, and to know our own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free us from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

▼ DES FORD

Eli’s Reflection: *Some people know God more than their own wretchedness, and other people know their own wretchedness more than they know God. Which one do you tend towards more strongly? What does this tell you about the areas in which you need to grow in your walk with God?*

Letter from Ukraine...

WARMED BY THE GOSPEL

GNU's partnership with God in Ukraine has seen another 61 wonderful people give their lives to Jesus. When GNU ministers Eliezer Gonzalez and Philip Rodionoff visited in April, they found bitter winds carrying snow from the Arctic. Ukraine's economic chill is just as palpable. War has decimated the economy, and refugees living hand to mouth are a constant reminder of the misery in this part of the world. But, thanks to your support of GNU's ministry, the Gospel is warming hearts with its message of hope and joy.

Eliezer and Philip connected with the local GNU minister for a Gospel campaign in the city of Poltava. They reached out to all who would listen – long-time Christians and the irreligious alike, refugees, drug addicts in a rehabilitation programme, prisoners in the city's jail.

The years of Godless Soviet rule are still etched deeply on the minds of these people, who were taught that no thinking person could possibly believe in God. Now, they are learning to their joy that the opposite is true. Even those who have been raised as nominal Christians often have little understanding of the light and hope of the Gospel. This was the message you helped Eli and Philip take to these people. They came to listen, rugged against the cold; keeping their warm coats and hats on inside the chilly hall. Both Eli and Philip spoke through translators at each session, warming minds and hearts to the truth and hope of the Gospel.

Everyone who attended the meetings received a copy of GNU's book about the Christian life, *Tree of Life*, the translation into Russian and printing of which was funded by your generous support.

In all, over sixty people accepted Jesus and more than a dozen were baptised in various locations. Each person has



Eli (centre front) and Philip (right rear) rejoice in the Gospel with a group of new Christians from the drug rehabilitation centre.

a story that is precious to us. But there is one incident that demonstrates the power of God to work with individuals, where they are, how they are. At the final baptism, Eli asked if there was anyone else who wanted to be baptised, then and there.

A young man came running from the back of the hall, his enthusiasm bubbling over. It turned out there was also an element of astonishment in his enthusiasm. He had attended most of the meetings with some friends from the drug rehabilitation centre, but he sat at the back of the hall to mock and joke. However, the spirit of God takes little notice of bravado, and instead works on the heart. Gradually Valerii recognised his need. For the first time in his life, he heard the voice of God. When that final call came, he still hesitated, his jocular, mocking habit of a lifetime refusing to let go. He tossed a coin. "Heads I will, tails I won't." God made sure of the answer, and Valerii knew that no small thing had happened.

"God cares about me too, so I am coming home to his Kingdom," he said, "and this time, it's no joke."

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Meditate on the power of God to warm life and fill it with certainty and joy. Ask God to guide your response to his bounty.*

BE GRATEFUL FOR THE STORMS

The purpose of sorrow is to strand you
on the Rock of Ages.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. – Matthew 5:4, NIV.

To come to God, I must be stripped of my self-sufficiency. The blessed poor in spirit know they do not have in themselves what the righteous law demands.

All human philosophy says sorrow is the great trouble of the earth. Jesus says that sorrow is the great opportunity. Sorrow can empty your hands of dirt, so God can fill them with jewels. Sorrow can divorce you quickly from the carnal, the worldly, temporal, and evil.

Jesus teaches that the purpose of sorrow is to strand you on the Rock of Ages. Jesus has the courage to say that if we will see our troubles correctly, they will result in blessing, because trouble punctures the illusion that I am sufficient.

We are very much like those moths attracted by the light. The world has many glowing lights: wealth, fame, possessions, power, sex. They can burn us; they can scorch us. And if we use them other than how God says to use them, they can destroy us. But God, in mercy, empties our hands of tinsel and garbage that he might put something better there.

Christ has the courage to say, "Blessed are you if you have problems." Christ teaches us to say "Thank God" for all the things we think are imponderable weights, insufferable dilemmas, and overwhelming troubles!

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Can you bring yourself to thank God for your biggest troubles? Make a point of praying a prayer of praise and gratitude specifically for your troubles. Make a point of listening to what God has to say to you in response. What does that do for your heart?*

GOD FOCUSES ON THE HEART

If your heart is right with God, the rest will follow.

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also
(Matthew 6:21, NIV).*

It's natural for us to focus on the externals – things we can see, hear, touch, and try to control. However, the teachings of Jesus overwhelmingly focus on the heart. Jesus directly and consistently rebuked those whose religious teachings were focused on the externals.

Jesus knew that a transformed heart leads to a transformed life, and never the other way around. He taught a Gospel that emphasised God's radical love for his wayward children. It is a love that can melt and transform the hardest heart. From such a heart will come the kind of Kingdom life that pleases God.

Without a radical transformation of the heart, the externals are meaningless, and even dangerous in the extreme. To focus on any other kind of "gospel" is to be like the white-washed sepulchres of the Pharisees—seemingly nice and shiny on the outside, but putrid and stinking of corruption on the inside (Matthew 23:27–28). Jesus was very clear that what defiles us is not the externals, but those things that come out from our hearts (Matthew 15:1–20; Matthew 23:27–28).

If your heart is right with God, the rest will follow. If it isn't, then you will struggle all your life, attempting to live a life that you will never be able to live. And you will lose your soul.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *What are the areas of your life that need to be transformed? Go on your knees, and make a mental list of these areas. Now yield them to Christ in repentance and faith. And then, be faithful and diligent with your life, and wait patiently for God.*

BEYOND INDOCTRINATION

Have you been “gospelised”?
Or have you merely been indoctrinated?

Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:13).

During approximately 100 days between April 7 and mid-July 1994, it is estimated that between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Rwandans were killed, up to 70% of the Tutsi and 20% of Rwanda’s total population. This was the genocidal mass slaughter of the Tutsi minority and moderate Hutu, by members of the Hutu majority—many of them Christians.

Yes, the horrific reality is that those who rose up to barbarously hack their neighbours to death were Christians of all persuasions. The churches in Rwanda before the genocide tended strongly towards fundamentalism and legalism, and they still do today. Has nothing been learnt?

How can this be? It is because Christians have too often spent their energies indoctrinating people, rather than “gospelising” them.

In terms of priorities, God does not call us to be rooted and grounded in knowledge and standards, or to understand all doctrine or prophecy. God calls us, as our first duty, to be rooted and grounded in love, through the indwelling of Christ in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17–19). Religion based on any other foundation incurs the words of Christ in Matthew 25:15.

What about you? Have you been truly gospelised? Or have you merely been indoctrinated?

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli’s Reflection: *Think carefully about the questions at the end of this devotional. Make it a point to study and understand what the Gospel is. How will you know if you have been “gospelised”? I suggest it is because you will become kinder, gentler, forgiving, and more full of grace in all your dealings with others.*

HOW TO SEE GOD IN EVERYTHING

What we see depends on what we are.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called
children of God. (Matthew 5:8–9, NIV).*

What wonderful things are contained in Jesus' words! What we are determines what we see. This verse says that life is a mirror. It promises all sorts of delights to those who get into a right relationship with Jesus. In that relationship, we will see God in everything.

We will see God in nature. If an atheist looks up at the stars, he doesn't see stars. He says, "Look at all the cold, empty space between those lights." If you are a believer, you say, "Look at all those glorious candles up there: diamonds God has scattered in the night." When you are a Christian your eyes are opened, and you can see God in nature.

When you are a Christian you can also see God in the providences of your own life—in everything. The Christian sees the miraculous working of God in his own life, just as in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

What we see depends on what we are. Because life is a mirror, we will reflect the love of God back to the world. So Jesus tells us: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*" (Matthew 5:9 NRSV). Christ "*is our peace*" (Ephesians 2:14). Having received peace, we begin to shed it abroad.

▼ DES FORD

Eli's Reflection: *If what we see depends on what we are, how do you see the world and your relationships? Do you see everything as a child of the Kingdom, or as a non-believer? What changes do you need to make in your life to see the world through the eyes of a beloved and confident child of God?*

JESUS REIGNS!

Christ is sitting at the right hand of power, despite how the circumstances might seem to you.

The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of your enemies!" (Psalm 110:1–2, NIV.)

The passage from the Old Testament that is most often cited in the New is Psalm 110. The apostolic church saw this Psalm as referring to the risen, ascended Messiah, and the Kingdom that he had firmly established in this world at the Cross. They understood that they were living in the time of the 'until'—the time during which Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father, waiting until the time his kingdom physically overthrows all the kingdoms of this world.

Despite worldly appearances, Christ is sitting at the right hand of power. The Kingdom of God is already established on this earth, although not yet manifested in its fullness. Christ still rules *"in the midst of his enemies"* (Psalm 110:2). We look forward to the time soon when Christ's enemies will all be completely overthrown.

Until that time, we are living in the 'until'. We keep our eyes on Jesus who has gone before us, who has won the victory on our behalf, and who rules over all. That reality is transformative for how we see ourselves, for our relationships, and how we relate to the world around us.

We announce Christ's kingdom wherever we go, while we wait until the time when all of Christ's enemies will finally be under his feet.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *It's not easy to wait for things to be set right. But it's easier to wait if you know that Jesus reigns! Do you have a favourite worship song on the theme of Christ's kingship? Play it, and give yourself an encouraging boost!*

PROMISES TO HOLD ON TO

Take some time to reflect on this group of devotionals.
What promise would you especially like to hold on to?

► *The world has changed and it's going to keep changing, but God never changes; so we are safe when we cling to him.* **Charles R Swindoll**

SALVATION IS A DONE DEAL

We are not to wring our hands and worry about our salvation. Instead we are to celebrate and to hold on to the gift we have already been given.

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:10, NIV).

Two thousand years ago all your sins were forgiven, you were given a free pass into the Kingdom of God, and you were granted eternal life. The New Testament tells you this again and again, including 1 Corinthians 6:10. It is a gift you simply receive today.

Sin has been dealt with in our lives through a once-for-all and totally sufficient sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:12–14). Through it we have been made perfect forever at Calvary. Because of that, we are now being made holy.

The greatest benefit of salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14), who assures us that when Christ said, “Father, forgive them,” that his prayer was answered. The Holy Spirit guarantees to us that when Christ cried out, “It is finished!” it really is finished—two thousand years ago, at Calvary. He accomplished this complete salvation for the world (John 3:16). It is an historical fact. It is received by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). Your salvation depends on it.

We are not to wring our hands and worry about our salvation. Instead we are to celebrate and to hold on to the gift we have already been given. (Hebrews 10:23).

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *We have celebrations for all sorts of things that aren't so important in the big scheme of things. Here is an idea: throw a party to celebrate your salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. Invite a few friends who need to know.*

MOTIVATED BY CALVARY

All Christian behaviour springs from a heart that is daily transformed by the vision of the Cross.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20, NIV).

One of the main things wrong with this world is the lack of right standards. The multitudes think that murder, even the mass murder which we call war, is okay; rape is okay, including rape of the mind and soul by propaganda and pornography and twisted media; theft is okay, from family, employers, neighbouring territories or other people.

This lack of standards springs from the failure to worship, and to see the priorities of reverence, adoration, and holiness. These failures are a result of the greatest failure of all: the failure to meditate upon the Cross, that most terrible of all tragedies and yet most glorious of all triumphs.

Your behaviour, as Matthew Arnold says, is to be “three-fourths of life,” but the other fourth is the motive power of the three-fourths. A train is much longer than the locomotive, but the locomotive provides the motive power. A building is much higher than the foundation, but the foundation is essential. A tree is much larger than the root, but the root gives life to the tree.

The Cross of Christ is the ‘locomotive’ that provides the power, the “foundation” that secures the building and the ‘root’ that gives life. All Christian behaviour springs from a heart that is daily transformed by the vision of the Cross.

▼ DES FORD

Eli’s Reflection: *In your spiritual growth, do you tend to focus more on your behaviour or on the Cross of Christ? How do you think things might change in your life if you focussed more on Jesus and what he achieved at Calvary for you?*

COMMUNION AND SERVICE

**Martha's fault was that she forgot the Master,
and only remembered the service.**

*Martha was cumbered about much serving
(Luke 10:40, KJV).*

Martha's fault was not that she served: it is a good thing for every Christian to serve others. In fact, "I serve" should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of heaven. And it was not Martha's fault that she had "much serving." We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can in the Master's service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. How fortunate she was to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and fortunate, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the task.

Martha's fault was that she grew "cumbered with much serving," so that she forgot the Master, and only remembered the service. She allowed service to override communion, and so presented one duty stained with the blood of another.

The lesson of this story is that we should be Martha and Mary in one: we should do much service, and have much communion at the same time. For this we need great grace. It is easier to serve than to commune.

If we are to be truly useful in God's service in this life, we must keep ourselves in constant communion with the Lord Jesus; we must ensure that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world.

▼ **CHARLES SPURGEON (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *It's so easy to focus on the service, and forget the Master, isn't it? Can you see a little of "Martha" in your own life? What can you do to help you remember that everything you do, you do for Jesus, and to make him the focus of all of your service?*

YOU NEED NEVER WALK ALONE

True religion is eternal life lived in the midst of time.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matthew 28: 18-20 RSV).

From time to time we feel as barren and as fruitless as Aaron's rod before it budded (Numbers 17). We sometimes feel as empty as the widow's cruse of oil (1 Kings 17), as desperate as sinking Peter (Matthew 14), and as frustrated as the disciples who fished all night and took nothing in their nets (Luke 5).

This is a common, recurring, human experience. But is it necessary?

There is One who overcame the world, and who not only said that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him, but that he would be with us always.

True religion is eternal life lived in the midst of time—in the present. True religion is lived by the power of, and in the company of, God. The original sin that brought upon us all our woe was when man tried to be independent of God (Genesis 3:5).

When our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, he breathed upon his disciples and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20:22). By so doing, he was saying, "Because of the Cross, you need never walk alone. Because of the Cross, through me, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God has come to dwell alongside you, and inside you, now and forever."

▼ DES FORD

Eli's Reflection: *We read above that "True religion is eternal life lived in the midst of time." Today is a new day. Purpose to live out part of your eternal life in the midst of today, walking alongside Christ. Then review your experience at the end of the day.*

THE LONGEST SILENCE

You are forgiven. You are accepted.

You are loved. You are his.

“O God, do not remain quiet; Do not be silent and, O God, do not be still (Psalm 83:1, NASB).”

The longest silence was when that woman who was a foreigner followed Jesus along the road, crying out, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! (Matthew 15:22)

The longest silence was when the crowd cried for the blood of the immoral woman thrown at Jesus' feet.

The longest silence was when they had brutally nailed Jesus to the timbers, and they raised him up high. What would he say? “Father, forgive them, for they know now what they do” (Luke 23:34).

There will be times when you also will go through what seems to be your own time of ‘the longest silence’, and when it seems that God is absent, and you are alone in that silence. But it is not God who is silent; it's just our hearts that need tuning to his frequency of love.

Listen to it now: *But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name* (John 1:12, NKJV).

The longest silence of all was that Friday when they placed him in a tomb behind a rock. They thought he would never again be heard. But on that Sunday the whole world heard his voice.

You are forgiven. You are accepted. You are loved. You are his.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *In the Bible, the longest silences have the most glorious resolutions. Are you going through a time of silence right now? Pray that God will keep you faithful until you receive his answer.*

GOD ADDS HIS GRACE TO OUR INFIRMITIES

God is with you in your fiery furnaces.

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

When Daniel's friends were in the burning, fiery furnace, their enemies thought they were going to be burnt to a crisp. Then they saw God walking with them.

The king was surprised:

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25 NKJV).

The only thing the three Hebrew worthies lost in the fiery furnace was their bonds. They were burnt away, leaving the faithful three in perfect freedom.

God is with us in our fiery furnaces. We don't have to bear anything alone. That's why Paul could say,

"Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

That is not easy to do. I hate infirmities; I detest them. But God knows better. He says, "You must learn that strength has nothing to do with you—it's mine!"

The record in Corinthians is very clear. The Lord says to Paul, "I'm not going to take away your infirmities, Paul. My grace is sufficient for you."

▼ DES FORD

Eli's Reflection: *If you are in a fiery furnace of trial and tribulation right now, are you aware that God is there with you? What a wonderful opportunity to converse with him and come closer to him! Consider increasing the time you set aside for prayer and meditation upon the Word.*

THE UNBELIEVER AND THE ACORN

There is nothing that can keep a Christian down, not now, or certainly not on the day of resurrection.

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead (Philippians 3:10, NLT).

In Italy is the centuries-old grave of an unbeliever. Before he died, he ordered a huge stone slab for his grave to prevent him from being raised from the dead if there was, after all, a resurrection. The sign announced: "I do not want to be raised from the dead. I don't believe in it."

A hundred years later an acorn had pushed through the slab and grown into a towering oak tree. A visiting minister asked himself, "If an acorn, which has power of biological life in it, can split a slab like that, what can the acorn of God's resurrection power do in a person's life?"

This story, told by Tim Keller, highlights a powerful truth. When you know Christ you will experience his mighty resurrection power. The apostle Paul talks specifically about the resurrection of the dead at the last day, but also about how that certainty changes our present reality. When, by faith, we accept Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf, this empowers us to press on towards the heavenly prize (Philippians 3:14).

Today, the mighty resurrection power of Christ is shed abroad to all who believe; to all who are righteous through faith in Him. There is nothing that can keep a Christian down, not now, or certainly not on the day of resurrection!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Is something getting you down today? Reflect on your favourite Bible passage about the resurrection, or listen to a great worship song on that same theme. Don't let this thing get you down, because Jesus is alive, and he has overcome for you!*

EMBRACE PURE JOY

Choose to breathe
the pure, sweet air of heaven.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds (James 1:2, NIV).

What is pure joy for you? Is it a day at the beach? Is it breakfast in bed? Is it winning the lottery?

The Apostle James starts his letter with a really strange statement. You would expect him to tell his readers to be joyful when everything is going well because the Lord is blessing them. Not at all; instead he tells us to consider it pure joy when we face trouble and difficulty.

James says that “whenever” you are facing trials – not some of the trials, but all of them – you should count it not as a little bit of joy, but 100%, unadulterated, full-bottle joy!

And the word “joy” in the Bible doesn’t mean a “grin-and-bear-it” kind of pious tolerance. It really does mean your “cup-runneth-over,” “jump-up-and-down,” “can’t-hide-it” kind of joy.

That joy reflects the reality that we enjoy as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven—the reality that all evil has been overcome, even death itself; the reality that we are not only accepted by God, but are his treasured children, forgiven and cherished. And whatever happens, that always remains true.

Embrace pure joy. Choose today to breathe the pure, sweet air of heaven, instead of the pollution that clouds the glory Christ has for us.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli’s Reflection: *The thought in this devotional—that whenever we face trials we should count them as pure joy—is very challenging. Where is the deficiency? Is it in our lack of faith in God, or in his lack of goodness?*

HOW TO ENJOY PEACE WITH GOD

**We have been cleansed once for all,
but our feet still need to be washed
from the defilement of our daily walk
as children of God.**

Father, I have sinned. (Luke 15:18, KJV).

Those whom Christ has washed in his precious blood... no longer stand where they can be condemned, but are once for all accepted in the Beloved. [But] even children offend, so ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge the sinfulness in their character?

Suppose I don't take my sins against God to him immediately to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus: what will be the consequence? I shall feel at a distance from him; I shall doubt his love for me; I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father.

But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to him and tell him all, and accept his forgiveness, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian life, not only knowing I am saved, but also enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord.

We have been cleansed once for all, but our feet still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk as children of God.

▼ **CHARLES SPURGEON (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *Charles Spurgeon talks here about the need for Christians to confess their sins to God, even though they are accepted in the Beloved. Do you regularly confess your sins to God? If not, why not?*

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH CHRIST

**By surrender we are to consecrate our all to Christ,
and by faith we are to receive his all.**

*One has died for all; therefore have all died
(2 Corinthians 5:14, RSV).*

The Bible asserts that when Jesus died, then the whole wicked world potentially died in him and paid the price for its sins. Because of this, God is already reconciled to all men, so he says, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Potentially all men are saved; all that individuals need to do is accept so great a salvation and by that act of acceptance, lay hold of eternal life.

Faith has no virtue in itself. It is merely the hand by which we receive the One in whom is all virtue. Thus righteousness does not come through faith in our faith; it comes through looking at Jesus Christ and believing what he says.

True belief when connected with a person always involves more than a mental assent. If we believe in a banker, we will entrust our money to him; if we believe in a doctor, we go to him with our physical ills. If we are to believe in Christ the Saviour and Lord, we must both permit him to save us from our sins and obey Him implicitly.

Thus it is that repentance, confession of sin, restitution, and obedience are always associated with conversion and regeneration. By surrender we are to consecrate our all to Christ, and by faith we are to receive his all.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *There are many people who say they believe in God, but it is just a matter of mental assent: they agree with God but have areas of their lives that they are unwilling to surrender to him. Are there any areas of your life that are still unsundered to Christ? Now is the time!*

Letter from India...

SCHOOL FOR GOSPEL EVANGELISTS

Once a month, there's a special buzz at the Good News Children's Centre in Nandiwada, and you helped make it happen! The hall becomes the venue for GNU's Gospel Training programme for pastors.

This initiative has been made possible by your ongoing support of GNU's work in India. The programme is indeed an investment in eternity, as pastors, many of them relatively recent converts to Christianity themselves, learn how to preach the Gospel effectively. The rewards are seen as more people respond to the Gospel message. This is a living, contemporary example of Jesus' Parable of the Sower. The seed you are helping to scatter is indeed reaping an increasing harvest for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Each month, pastors from many areas of the Andhra Pradesh province of India travel to Nandiwada for the five-hour conference. The first conference was held in January of this year, and each successive month has seen an increase in attendance as more Christian pastors ask to attend. As we go to print, thirty-five pastors, many very young, attended the most recent (April) meeting.

Led by Pastor Joseph, pastors learn the basics of how to conduct a Gospel meeting, and in particular, how to share the essential, uncomplicated heart of the Gospel in a more powerful way.

They watch the latest GNU TV programme, the content of which is used to teach them how best to communicate the



▼ **Pastor Joseph** leads the monthly training conference for pastors in India.

Good News of the Gospel. Over the coming weeks, they then use this material in their own outreach.

This programme is establishing a powerful team of Gospel evangelists, who in turn are able to reach a greater number of people more effectively.

The other, incalculable benefit of the programme is the opportunity for fellowship with others involved in the same work. They pray and share a meal together, discuss their challenges, and celebrate the Lord's blessing of their work.

One of the pastors wrote to us:

This Gospel training programme is very, very helpful for us to learn how to spread the holy Gospel in the many remote villages. I give thanks to Jesus for giving us a chance to attend this Gospel meeting every month.

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Ask for God's special blessing on this monthly gathering of his modern-day apostles in India. Thank God that he summons us to help spread the Word fast and multiply the results for his kingdom.*

IMPROVE YOUR SELF-TALK

God gave himself in Jesus Christ
as heaven's perfect gift to you.

I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him" (Lamentations 3:24, NIV).

What is your self-talk like? Unfortunately, too often mine tends to be negative.

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, we read, *"The Lord is my portion."* The word "portion" is one of the most powerful metaphors for the blessing that believers in God possess.

The original word has many meanings, referring to what is rightfully yours. It is something you receive as a gift, that is entirely and indisputably yours.

A portion of food can be very good. A portion of land is wonderful. A portion of money can be great. But the Bible talks about something even better: *"The Lord is my portion."*

Imagine that! To receive God as a gift, unexpected and free! To have as your God the Lord who gives you not 'things', but himself completely! Truly, God gave himself in Jesus Christ as heaven's perfect gift to you.

That's why the Psalmist sings,

Whom have I in heaven but you, Lord, and earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:26-26).

So change your self-talk. Go on; tell yourself, "The Lord is my portion today. He has given himself to me, and today, by accepting him, I have everything I need."

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Try it out today. When you are challenged during the day, say to yourself, "Jesus is all I need." By affirming your faith, you claim his promise!*

CARE FOR THE POOR

All we do for his people
is graciously accepted by Christ
as done to himself.

Remember the poor (Galatians 2:10, KJV).

Why does God allow so many of his children to be poor? He could make them all rich if he pleased. There is no necessity that they should be poor, except that he sees it to be best. He could supply them, but he does not choose to do so; he allows them to suffer want, he allows them to remain in poor and unnoticed. Why is this?

There are many reasons: one is, to give us, who are favoured with enough, an opportunity of showing our love to Jesus. If there were no sons of need in the world we should lose the sweet privilege of demonstrating our love, by ministering with our gifts to his poorer brethren. God has given us this opportunity to prove that our love for him is more than words, and that it extends to our fellow men as well—a love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

If we truly love Christ, those who are dear to him will be dear to us also. That extends to “the world”, for we are reminded that *“God so loved the world...”*.

Let us then look upon it not as a duty, but as a privilege to relieve the poor of the Lord’s flock—remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”* All we do for his people is graciously accepted by Christ as done to himself.

▼ **CHARLES SPURGEON (ADAPTED)**

Eli’s Reflection: *What do you have to do with the poor? Do you avoid them? Do you go to where they are? Are you regularly involved in serving them in meeting their needs?*

MAKE GRATITUDE A HABIT

There is no worse leprosy
than ingratitude.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17, NIV).

I can give you a sure recipe for how to be miserable twenty-four hours a day: think of yourself. People are miserable, because they focus on themselves, and they're not grateful.

If one person in ten ever thanks you, you should thank God, you're being treated as well as Jesus (Luke 17:11-19). There is no worse leprosy than ingratitude.

Who are you? A child of the King! What gratitude this deserves! You and I should be in the habit of thanking God constantly and continuously through every day.

I once saw a cartoon with two people who say to God, "Lord, is it true that a million years to you are just as a second?" The answer comes down, "That's true." Then the other person says, "And, Lord, is it true that a million dollars to you are just like a penny?" "Yes," resounds the answer. "Then, Lord, give us a penny," they both cry. And the answer comes, "Wait a second."

Just think about it: it takes the omnipotent love of God just to cope with our selfishness. Gratitude is the opposite of selfishness. Gratitude is outgoing, selfishness is ingoing.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Like most good things, gratitude doesn't come naturally. So have some fun today. Say to yourself now, "By the power vested in me, I proclaim this to be Gratitude Day, and I will show Gratitude in some way to every person I meet." At the end of the day, review how your day went.*

PERSIST IN PRAYER

What great sinners the Lord has had mercy on,
and how great are his promises to sinners!

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance... (Ephesians 6:18, NKJV).

Apparent delays in our prayers being answered by God are not signs of his displeasure; he may sometimes hide his face from his dearest saints (Isaiah 8:17). He loves to keep his people... knocking at the gate of heaven; it may be, says the soul, that the Lord is testing me...

Oh, how many souls are there in the world, that truly fear the Lord, who, because they are not well informed in their minds, are often ready to give up hope, at almost every trick and temptation of Satan! The Lord pity them, and help them to *"pray with their spirit, and also with their minds."*

In my own life, when I have been in an agony of spirit, I have been strongly persuaded to stop praying, and to seek the Lord no longer.

But then I have come to understand what great sinners the Lord has had mercy on, and how great are his promises to everyone. I learned that it was not the well person, but the sick, not the righteous, but the sinner, not the full, but the empty, that he extended his grace and mercy to. This made me, through the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to cling to him, to hang on him, and still to cry out, though for the present he did not answer.

▼ **JOHN BUNYAN (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *Bunyan makes the point here that the Lord extends his mercy to 'the empty'. Take some time to reflect on this. What there is in your life that you need to be emptied of? What is standing in the way between you and your God? What can you do about it? Make this a point of prayer today.*

STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus is God's last Word and final Authority.

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31, NKJV).

Everybody asks questions about what life means. But many people, like Pilate, are content with the asking and do not seek answers.

Only the Holy Scriptures have answers that are true. Without Scripture, life becomes "a dusty scuffle across a parched terrain," "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Macbeth, V, v, 26). The Bible is inerrant and infallible for its purpose. Its purpose is that we may believe in Jesus, and have life in his name (John 20:31).

It is not enough to ask, "What does the Bible say?" We must also ask, "What does the Bible mean by these words?"

We must ask questions of every passage of Scripture we read. Why was this written? Where was it written? When was it written? Who wrote it? To whom was it written? Who first read it? What is its chief message, and what things are merely ancillary? What practical meaning does it have for me today? Have I considered the parallel passages to this one? What did Jesus say on this topic?

Remember: the New Testament interprets the Old Testament; the epistles interpret the gospels; systematic passages interpret the incidental passages; plain didactic, and teaching passages interpret symbolic passages. However at the end of the day, remember Jesus is God's last Word and final Authority.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *Do you belong to a Bible study group? If not, make a plan to join one. If you do, make a plan to re-energise it!*

PROMISES TO HOLD ON TO

*Take some time to reflect on this group of devotionals.
What promise would you especially like to hold on to?*

▼ *Wherever the plan of God takes you, the grace of God will sustain you. John Paul Warren*

Letter from India...

A SPECIAL MIRACLE OF GOSPEL LOVE

A great venture in faith has been happening in the developing Christian community in Andhra Pradesh, India. Another need identified, and the means to do something about it supplied by God—through faithful people such as yourself.

In every village he visits, Pastor Joseph has found the most destitute of all - elderly people with no family support, living in extreme poverty and deprivation. It sparked a longing to do something practical for these people who had no ability to look after themselves.

The Blessy Old Age Care Centre recently opened in Nandiwada, and already there are almost 150 women living there, representing many of the surrounding villages. They are overwhelmed by the kindness they receive, which contrasts so dramatically with the lives of misery and loneliness they knew previously.

Here, they are given food and a place to live; they have their basic needs looked after.

Besides their physical needs, they are learning about the love of Jesus that drives everything that is done for them. They attend the prayer meetings at the Good News Children's Centre, and they are overjoyed to interact with the children. They see the GNU TV programme weekly, and this helps them learn more about Christianity.

Most of all, however, they are learning about the Gospel firsthand through the kindness they are being shown.



▼ *Pastor Joseph with some of the elderly women who have found friendship, support, and the Good News of the Gospel when they most needed it.*

Saramma, one of the women who now lives in this community, told us:

"Through the Blessy Old Age Care Centre, I have come to know Jesus. I have been learning about the holy Bible as I am nearing the end of my life. I am well fed here and I am so happy in Christ Jesus."

The Blessy Old Age Care Centre is living proof that where the love of God drives life, everything is possible.

Pastor Joseph sums up the feeling of everyone associated with this centre:

"This old age care centre started with great faith in Jesus. We had the desire to serve the poorest of the poor living in remote villages, and to preach the Good News to them. So now at the end of their lives they will learn about the holy Bible and will be able to live prayerfully and peacefully."

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Praise God for the gift of his love and care, and thank him for dedicated people who desire to live that love to the benefit of others. Pray for his guidance as you seek to reflect the great love of Jesus for you.*

SMASHING GOOD NEWS!

To crush Satan under your feet,
share the Gospel.

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet
(Romans 16:20, NIV).*

This short verse raises some questions. How can Satan be crushed under our feet? Surely, like in other passages in the New Testament, shouldn't Satan be crushed under Jesus' feet? And how can the God of peace do smashing and crushing?

In a quarter of the times that the Greek word translated as "crushed" here is in the New Testament, it refers to how demonic spirits crushed people and shattered their lives, taking away their peace. However, Isaiah 53:5 (also Romans 5:24) tells us that Jesus was crushed to bring us peace.

The most important thing is to have peace with God. You can have peace in the world, but you will never ever have peace with the world until Satan is crushed. To bring ultimate peace, God must finally crush Satan out of existence, and he will do it under the beautiful feel of those that proclaim the gospel (Romans 10:15; Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:24).

To crush Satan under your feet, share the Gospel. When you do that, through the power of Christ, you are coming closer to the day when God will finally crush Satan forever.

How we should look forward to that day! Peace with God now, and peace everlasting to come. That really is smashing good news!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *It is a startling revelation that Jesus crushes Satan under his feet through our sharing of the Gospel. If we want Satan crushed and his power out of our lives, we need to be sharing the Good News with others. Is this an important part of your life? If not, make it so.*

HOW NOT TO BURN OUT

**We can persevere
when we see him who is invisible.**

By faith [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27, NIV).

Everything in life depends on what you look at. This is much easier to preach than to practice. But Scripture is trying to tell us we can persevere when we see him who is invisible.

My sad experience is this: when trouble comes, I am tempted to look at the trouble only. Things don't get any better until I find myself repeatedly praying, "Lord, don't just fix the trouble, fix me. Fix me! Make it more natural for me to see You as bigger, higher, stronger than this threat that faces me."

Moses didn't learn this lesson easily. At 40, he blew everything. It's been said about Moses that he spent 40 years learning to be somebody in Pharaoh's court; 40 years learning to be nobody, looking after sheep; and only then was God able to use him for the next 40 years.

Moses saw a bush aglow with God: it was burning, but not burnt out.

God spoke to Moses out of the bush, and in effect said, "Moses, you were burnt out 40 years ago. You were like one of these shrivelled, desert bushes. But, Moses, if you will accept my presence, you won't burn out."

Any old bush will do. It's not the bush that's important. It's the God who's in the bush.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *"Everything in life depends on what you look at," so what are you looking at today? Make it your goal today to see the things that are invisible, such as looking beyond people's actions to see their hearts, and most importantly, to see your invisible God who walks beside you.*

THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGHT OF ALL

In the spiritual warfare,
the consequences, when the fight is over,
are unchangeable and eternal.

Fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12, NKJV).

There is another warfare of far greater importance than any war that was ever waged by man. The warfare I speak of is the spiritual warfare.

This warfare, I am aware, is something which many people know nothing about. Talk to them about it, and they are ready to set you down as a madman, an enthusiast, or a fool. And yet it is as real and true as any war the world has ever seen. It has its hand-to-hand conflicts and its wounds. It has its watchings and fatigues. It has its sieges and assaults. It has its victories and its defeats. In the spiritual warfare the consequences, when the fight is over, are unchangeable and eternal.

It is of this warfare that St. Paul spoke to Timothy, when he wrote those burning words: *"Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life."* We meet each other at a critical period of the world's history. Men's minds are full of *"wars and rumors of wars."* Men's hearts are full of fear while they look at the things that seem to be coming to the world. On every side the horizon looks black and gloomy. Who can tell when the storm will burst? These are the solemn words which the Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to write down: *"Fight the good fight of faith."*

▼ **J.C. RYLE**

Eli's Reflection: *Some people look upon "spiritual warfare" with fascination and dread, but the truth is that we are all engaged in it every moment of our day. You will be involved in it during all of today. That's why it's important that you start your day by getting your orders and power from Jesus.*

ALWAYS BE PRAYING

True prayer life
is a constant communion.

*Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live
(Psalm 116:2, NKJV).*

Funnily enough, we have a strange idea about prayer. We think that prayer is for when we get up in the morning and when we lie down at night.

When Ruth Graham (evangelist Billy Graham's wife) was asked about her prayer life, she said, "I pray on the hoof." The kind of prayer that is esteemed in the Bible is not long, public prayer, but brief, frequent prayer. Prayer is constant communion with God.

The best way to pray is the way Christ exemplified. His prayers were short, pungent, but frequent. That's the best prayer life. By all means pray in the morning; by all means pray in the evening. But prayer "on the hoof" is the best way. This is what theologians call "ejaculatory prayer," or short, brief prayers. (See Nehemiah 1:5-11; 2:4; 4:9; 6:9; Genesis 17:18.)

This is real praying: praying all the time, about everything. The way you should pray for people is when the Lord puts them upon your heart. As soon as you have a worry about them, commit them to God.

I pray when I collect mail, and I pray as I answer all those letters. For 50 years I've prayed as I've walked or as I've jogged. True prayer life is a constant communion.

▼ **DES FORD**

Eli's Reflection: *This is very different to what I was taught as I was growing up, however I must confess that it has become my predominant mode of prayer. If you would like to start, it takes a little bit of reminding yourself to do it in the beginning, and then it becomes a habit.*

USE WHAT'S IN YOUR HAND

When you offer Jesus what's in your hand,
that's when miracles happen.

His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked (Matthew 15:32–34, NIV).

When Jesus suggested to the disciples that he wanted to feed the enormous crowd of 4,000 people by the lake, the disciples were full of excuses. Too often we do the same.

Just like he did with his disciples beside the lake, Jesus doesn't take any notice of our excuses at all. Instead, he simply asks us what we have in our hand.

I imagine that when the disciples said seven loaves and a few fish, they thought Jesus would have said, "I see. You were right. That's useless. Let's think of another plan." But that's not what Jesus said at all. Instead he took what they had in their hands and turned it into more than enough to feed 4,000 people.

Don't be frightened at the huge size of what Jesus asks us to do: to take the Bread of Life to the world. He doesn't ask us to do the impossible. Not at all! He takes care of that.

All Jesus asks is that we give him what he has already put in our hands, no matter how humble or small, and he will do the rest. When you offer Jesus what's in your hand, that's when miracles happen.

Check what's in your hands today. In faith, offer it to Jesus. Then stand back and watch what happens!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Is there a challenge that you are facing today? What's in your hand? What resources and abilities do you have that Jesus can use? Spend some time in prayer before you start your day, asking God to bless what you offer him, for his Kingdom's glory.*

PROMISES TO HOLD ON TO

Take some time to reflect on this group of devotionals.
What promise would you especially like to hold on to?

▼ *The will of God is not something you add to your life. It's a course you choose. You either line yourself up with the Son of God...or you capitulate to the principle which governs the rest of the world.*

Elisabeth Elliot

Letter from Africa...

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOSPEL

Christianity is spreading fast across Africa. However, as is the case everywhere, the Good News of the Gospel is often clouded with denominational bias. GNU's commitment is to the pure Gospel message: that Jesus Christ has paid the price for sin, and every person who accepts his free gift is certain of salvation. Your generosity helps to spread this Word fast.

GNU's Pastor David Kayumba, is based in Europe, and oversees the work in Africa. He was recently contacted by the pastors of four new churches in Rwanda. They were long-term Christians with a passion for the pure Gospel, which they felt was often obscured by a veil of doctrine and a 'performance-based' attitude to salvation.

Having heard about the work of GNU, and read the content of the website, the leaders of these new churches asked to meet with Pastor David. They drove 600 km from Rwanda to Uganda where they told their story: another story of hunger for the pure Gospel, another vision for spreading the Word of the Gospel throughout East Africa, and for doing this work for God in partnership with GNU.

GNU has no aspirations to be a church. We believe that we can best serve the Gospel by maintaining a trans-denominational approach, and GNU is happy to partner with churches that have a strong commitment to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our new partners in Rwanda requested training for their church members in the essentials of the Gospel, and in evangelism, so they can spread the Word fast in their areas.



▼ **Investing in the Gospel:** *Happy Christians, new partners with GNU in spreading the Word fast in Rwanda, hold the copies of Jesus Only which they had printed at their own expense.*

Pastor David carries a copy of *Jesus Only* in the Kinyarwanda language, and one immediate outcome of the meeting was the transfer of this electronic file to the pastors. Such is their commitment to the rapid spread of the Gospel, that at their own expense, they have already printed and distributed copies of the book to help with their evangelistic outreach. And thanks to your support, GNU has been able to contribute 300 copies of *Jesus + 0*.

Pastor David sent an enthusiastic report from the meeting: *My conversation with these pastors convinced me that these are people God has brought to us. They have captured the spirit of the Gospel and fully understand the mission of GNU.*

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Thank God that he touches hearts with the powerful truth of the Gospel, and that he allows you to have a part in spreading its message to others around the world.*

RULES ARE NOT ENOUGH

Faith always looks beyond self to God,
the Source of wisdom and strength,
for each moment's new decision.

Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation (Psalm 25:4–5, NKJV).

Issues are rarely right or wrong. Often they are between what is bad, and which is less bad. A wise person learns that “when two duties conflict, one ceases to be a duty.”

Error lies close to truth. Because values constantly come into conflict, the Christian is never relieved from the “strain” of faith: the necessity of constantly throwing oneself afresh upon the guiding Spirit of God. Amid life's bewildering circumstances faith always looks beyond self to God, the Source of wisdom and strength, for each moment's new decision.

Christians will find mere rules quite inadequate. Rules must change with situations, though principles never change. Only the prayerful, studious Christian will move wisely most of the time, even in the wider arena of compromise.

Is compromise easy for the Christian? Never! Can a Christian avoid compromise altogether? Never! Our lives are a mixture of change and stability, so every Christian will learn to adapt, while having unyielding loyalty to principle.

One day soon all the greys and all the blacks will alike be gone—morally as well as physically—and we will walk together in rainbow hours of everlasting day.

▼ DES FORD

Eli's Reflection: *Des Ford challenges us in saying that we can never avoid compromise altogether. Are there areas in your life in which you have compromised? Were they compromises with principles, or just rules? What did you learn? With whom can you share it?*

TRUEST LIFE IS FOUND IN SERVICE

We live by serving others. There is no other way.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34, NIV).

Yankel, a Jew living in New York, tells the story of how he survived the nightmare train journey in a boxcar to Auschwitz. When night came, it was freezing, deathly cold. There was an elderly man sitting next to him whom Yankel recognized from his hometown. He was shivering from head to toe, and looked terrible. So Yankel wrapped his arms around him and began rubbing him to warm him up, begging him to hang on. He did this all night.

When morning came, Yankel saw to his horror, that all around him were frozen bodies. Only two people had survived: the old man and Yankel. The old man survived because Yankel had kept him warm, and Yankel survived because he was warming him.

There is Kingdom life in the commandment of Christ to love one another (John 13:34; See also Luke 6:31). The first law of the Kingdom is selfless love, and the greatest manifestation of this is through service. Just like that boxcar, this world can be a dark and cold place. We live by serving others. There is no other way (Mark 10:45).

By serving others we share life with others. By serving others we enjoy the truest life ourselves. The Master has gone before and shown us the way. Now we must follow.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Those who don't serve others—who don't give and don't share—don't live. If you are able, make a point of unloosing the chains of selfishness in your life by giving to someone in need, or to a worthy charity, above and beyond what you are doing now.*

HOW TO WIN THE FIGHT OF FAITH

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ's person, work, and office, is the life, heart and mainspring of the Christian soldier's character.

Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6, KJV).

Christian warfare is utterly unlike the conflicts of this world. It does not depend on the strong arm, the quick eye, or the swift foot. It is not waged with physical weapons, but with spiritual. Faith is the hinge on which victory turns. Success depends entirely on believing. Faith in the truth of God's written Word is the primary foundation of the Christian soldier's character.

As for true Christians, faith is the very backbone of their spiritual existence. No one ever fights earnestly against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unless he has engraven on his heart certain great principles which he believes.

A special faith in our Lord Jesus Christ's person, work, and office, is the life, heart and mainspring of the Christian soldier's character.

He sees by faith an unseen Saviour, who loved him, gave himself for him, paid his debts for him, bore his sins, carried his transgressions, rose again for him, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate at the right hand of God. Seeing this Saviour and trusting in him, he feels peace and hope, and willingly does battle against the foes of his soul.

▼ **J.C. RYLE (ADAPTED)**

Eli's Reflection: *It's called the Fight of 'Faith' for a reason. It's not a fight to be good, better, or perfect. It's not a fight to be more knowledgeable in doctrinal matters than the next person. It's a fight to keep your faith strong. How is your Fight of Faith going?*

CHRIST'S ALL-CONQUERING CHURCH

In Christ, you are a member of that true church against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18 KJV).

What a prediction! What a claim! Here we are almost twenty centuries later, and about one in three people around the globe claims membership in Christ's church.

The picture in Matthew 16:18 is that of an advancing kingdom of God converging on the gates of hell and death, error and bloody persecution. The victorious army is clothed in righteousness. Its banner is the Spirit, lifting high the blessed gospel of Christ.

However, we must never confuse the church invisible of Matthew 16:18 with the visible church. Scripture tells us concerning the church, *"There is one body"* (Ephesians 4:4, compare 1 Corinthians 12:12).

Are you a member of the true church? Have you built your faith, not upon a human creed, but upon the God-human, the church's one Foundation? Have you received the anointing of the Holy Spirit? He is yours immediately upon your committal to Christ. Do you bear the mark of the genuine disciple? Here it is: *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another* (John 13:35; Matthew 25:34,40).

In Christ, you are a member of that true church against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *Are you a Christian first and a member of your particular church second? Or is it the other way around? Seen the right way, there's no conflict. But like most things in life, it's a matter of putting first things first. Whom do you follow?*

WE PROCLAIM TO YOU THE GOOD NEWS!

The proclamation of the Gospel
will...overwhelm the earth
like an ocean of grace, mercy and goodness.

*Through Jesus we proclaim forgiveness of sins to you.
... I'm going to do work in your day—a work you won't
believe, even if someone told you (Acts 13:38-41, CEB).*

In this important passage, Paul talks about two things: 1) the message of the Gospel; and 2) the work that the message of the Gospel is to do.

I encourage you to read this entire passage. It is a statement of the Gospel by the greatest theologian of Christianity, and a divinely inspired theologian no less. The Gospel is the proclamation of the forgiveness of sin, so that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, everyone who believes is put in a right relationship with God.

This is not part of the Gospel; it is not a summary of the Gospel; it is not a cut-down Gospel. It *is* the Gospel.

Paul then tells us about the work of the Gospel. The Gospel is never unnoticed. When the Gospel is proclaimed, people everywhere look and are astonished. Some believe; others scoff. When the Gospel is proclaimed, God works in astonishing ways. He makes our future completely different to our past. The Gospel transforms individuals, communities, societies, and nations. The proclamation of the Gospel will transform this world, and the righteousness of God will overwhelm the earth like an ocean of grace, mercy, and goodness.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Eli's Reflection: *When you accept the Gospel as the heart of your existence, then God calls you to become an agent of transformation in the world. How passionately are you praying that God will use you to transform your community?*

Letter from Africa...

THE MAGNETIC GOSPEL

Hasan Mahmood, a young Somali citizen, feels the strong pull of the Gospel as he rebuilds his life in a new country. GNU's Pastor Bonifresh writes that he has begun to find peace in the midst of grief as he reads the Bible given him, thanks to your support.

Hasan comes from Kismayu, one of the most dangerous parts of the world, where, in 2013, his family was wiped out by a grenade attack on their home by the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab. Only Hasan and his youngest brother survived, and they fled to safety in Uganda.

Hasan now believes that his parents had secretly converted to Christianity, for he occasionally saw his father reading a black-covered book that was probably a Bible. "I also saw my parents kneeling down as Christians do in prayer," he remembers. They still went to the mosque every day, but he is convinced they did this for fear of persecution and to protect their family. Perhaps the wrong people suspected their quiet opposition to the radical Islamist agenda; perhaps someone noticed their interest in Christianity.

Since arriving in Uganda and starting a new life there, Hasan has never been to a mosque. "Every time I see a mosque, it reminds me of the pool of blood and scattered body parts of my family," he says.

Now, Hasan is reading the Bible every day, and has attended Christian services at the university with Pastor Bonifresh. He has replaced his Muslim prayers with his favourite passage of Scripture, the Lord's Prayer, and all this is helping gradually to replace the pain in his heart with a sense of peace.

▼ **Prayer Point:** *Praise God for his unlimited power to turn violence and tragedy into peace through the Gospel. Praise him that he uses you to support this great work.*

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Biblical Quotations

The following translations of the Bible have been used:

NIV	New International Version
KJV	King James Version
AKJV	American King James Version
NET	NET Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
ISV	International Standard Version
NLT	New Living Translation
RV	Revised Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
TLB	The Living Bible
BSB	Berean Study Bible

Where no Bible reference appears, the authors have paraphrased the original text.

GET TO KNOW THE AUTHORS

DR DESMOND FORD



Dr Desmond Ford has a vibrant enthusiasm for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Affectionately known as “Des”, he’s worked as a pastor, and been a Bible teacher, minister and theologian for more than sixty years. He’s earned several degrees including two PhDs in theology, and has written twenty books.

Des Ford’s preaching emphasises justification by faith – the Good News that Christ, by his life and death, redeemed the world so that now “whosoever will, may come” to God. He affirms that the gospel is for everyone, following the instruction that Christ’s name should “be declared throughout all the earth”.

DR ELIEZER GONZALEZ



Eliezer Gonzalez is passionate about the gospel. With a previous background in teaching and management, he was called by the Lord into the gospel ministry. He’s earned Master’s degrees in Theology and Early Christian History, and a PhD in Early Christian History.

Most importantly, Eliezer communicates the gospel of Jesus Christ in a simple yet powerful way, and has presented this life-changing message in many countries and in many different forums. He’s praying for “millions upon millions of people to be in the Kingdom of God” as Good News Unlimited partners with you to spread the Word fast about Jesus.

**God's Unlimited Promises
to Hold On To**

UNLIMITED PURPOSE

Unlimited Purpose is the fifth in GNU's ongoing series of nine-week devotional booklets. Written by Eliezer Gonzalez and Des Ford, these encouraging devotionals are interspersed with wisdom and insights from great Christian thinkers. Inside, you'll find personal reflections and inspiring testimonies from GNU's global ministry to help you live daily for Christ, and to inspire you with the proven power of God's love in action.

It's our prayer that *Unlimited Purpose* will take you deeper into God's promise of unlimited love for you.

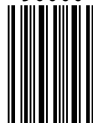
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