

# *When Winter Comes*



"LOOKING TO CHRIST  
WHEN ALL HOPE SEEMS LOST."



# "When Winter Comes"

## *God Sustains Us During the Winter Seasons of Life*

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# *Preface*

Since 1951 Waukesha Bible Church (WBC) has ministered to the Waukesha community. WBC is a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based Ministry. As a fellowship we are convinced that God is honored in the careful handling of His Word and in the acknowledgment that His Son, Jesus Christ, is enough for this life and in the life that is to come. We are equally convinced that God has entrusted us with this message. It is a message of life and not death; of freedom, not bondage. We wish to take this message to the ends of the earth until worshippers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation have been gathered to honor God.

## A Word of Introduction

Local Churches have received from God a sacred trust. This trust is a mission. This mission is defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Timothy 2:2. This same mission is pictured for us by the early church in the activity of the apostle Paul beginning in Acts 13:1. The mission is to duplicate herself in the lives of others. Church health is not defined by numerical size or budgetary well-being, but by the degree to which they are intentionally engaging in the reproducing of local churches. Churches birth churches. God's safeguard against doctrinal defect and pastoral apathy is through the strengthening and establishing of local churches.

## What is the Purpose of this Study?

The intent of all study is to ask the hard questions and to seek Biblical answers. Parroting standard answers without learning the truth first hand will produce an anemic faith. May it please our heavenly Father to open our eyes to the magnitude of His grace so that we might understand all that we are in His Son and all that He is for us.

## A word about Torn Veil Publications

Torn Veil Publications (TVP) is the distributing arm of WBC and exists to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. It is all designed as part of the WBC vision to spread a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based message to others.

## **When Winter Comes Introduction**

### **Why am I teaching this?**

I received this email from one of my former students. Listen carefully and see if you do not hear your own voice whispering these same thoughts.

I guess I really miss that super spiritual atmosphere of college where people were talking God-talk all over campus. It set the bar too high, and I can't keep up the feeding level that I had back then. I am like the sluggard you read about in Proverbs who realizes they are starving but doesn't take the initiative to raise their hand to their mouth. The biggest spiritual intake I have had recently has been through CCM [Contemporary Christian Music]. I always feel super rebuked when I hear those songs and think of where I was in college and all the ministry I was involved in and how now I feel like God has set me on a shelf - like he did with Saul in the OT, but I don't want it to make me bitter like it did to him. I want to keep the faith and keep fighting a good fight, but find myself without leadership. Again - I am getting to my ropes end with the single life. I am not like Paul who preferred single life.

I miss my home church and I know that they are praying for me, especially the kids, but this is my third year over here and this year things have just been harder. Not as far as work goes, but just inward struggles. I am turning 26 and feeling like an old maid, and I just spent 3 weeks in a [foreign] hospital where I had 2 surgeries, and I don't have anyone set up in leadership over me right now but God and He doesn't seem to be doing anything. I feel like I am running a holding pattern. I am busy, but bored. I am working, but unchallenged. I am spiritually alive as a positional truth, but can't find an outlet to express it or share it with others. Can you relate to my frustrations?

I presume that as a pastor there is nothing new under the sun, and that there is nothing happening to me that has not happened to thousands of others behind me. I know that. I guess I just need some encouragement to keep on keeping on, and to keep clinging to the positional truths and ignoring the discouragements of this world knowing that once it is over this vapor of life was all according to His perfect will anyway. I know what you preach, and I know 100% that it is true and accurate according to the Bible, but it doesn't stop the hungers, the thirsts, and the desires that come with life on this earth.

Every believer has gone through periods when they simply do not have the motivation to read their Bible, pray, or even the desire to attend church. Listen to the words of the Psalmist.

### **What is the biblical idea?**

<sup>1</sup> “as the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ . . . <sup>10</sup> As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ <sup>11</sup> Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God” (Ps. 42:1-3, 10, 11).

<sup>1</sup> “O God, You are my God; I shall seek you earnestly; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. <sup>2</sup> Thus I have seen you in the sanctuary, to see your power and your glory. . . <sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me” (Ps. 63:1, 2, 8).

Many times Christians find themselves in an emotional desert. We refer to this as spiritual dryness only because it relates to the spiritual aspect of our being. But what exactly is going on and how are we to view these periods in our life?

For those of us in the Midwest, we are very much accustomed to the four seasons of the year. Winter is that season of the year where everything lies dormant and appears dead and unyielding. The two bookends to winter’s tenure are the seasons of transition, fall and spring. Fall leads us into winter and spring leads us out of winter. Summer is somewhat enigmatic. Because of our present schooling year, summer becomes a time of family vacations, cook-outs, and visitation. I enjoy the seasons. Each one makes me glad for the other three. In the summer I look forward to winter and in the winter I look forward to the summer.

One of the tremendous beauties in our seasons is the changing of the leaves. Many in the Midwest take time out to run up North for the changing of the colors. Even here in our own communities we find the color of the leaves breath-taking. We have come to appreciate the colorful Maple tree. The Maple leaf turns bright red and yellow and ignites the entire landscape with its transitory beauty. Within a few short weeks all of its leaves will fall away and it will stand as a naked sentinel over the snow covered ground. Its life seems all but gone. Nothing appears to move from either within or without. Yet soon enough spring happens and new life is brought forth. It is at the end of the winter season and before full spring that the Maple tree yields its sugary treasure of Maple syrup.

*God sustains us during the winter seasons of life*

The Christian life is very much like the Maple tree and its seasonal life cycle. All of us have an autumn where our leaves begin to drop off and we enter a period of time that appears to be barren and unfruitful. The winter months of life are often preceded by a brilliant display of activity.

Yet, how are we to understand our winter seasons? Winter can be a time of tremendous dryness. Our skin cracks and flacks and moisture is crucial during this period of time. We become depressed and we struggle against this season of the year.

When we find ourselves struggling spiritually or emotionally, how are we to find comfort and rest? The issue is to make sure we understand what is happening in our lives from the perspective of God and not from that of our circumstances or feelings.

There are four areas that will be addressed in this study as it relates to the idea of the winter season and the means of resting in it.

1. The Sovereignty of God. Where is God in the midst of this? Has He absented Himself from these moments of the winter season?
2. The Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ. What has He done in my behalf and is it enough or do I need more?
3. The Supplication of the Holy Spirit. Is He right now unconditionally ministering in my behalf?
4. The Sufficiency of Scripture. Do the Scriptures have an intrinsic value that benefits the reader?

May it please the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to these four mind renewing and life transforming truths.

*God sustains us during the winter seasons of life*



## **When Winter Comes and the Sovereignty of God**

Comfort and rest can only be found by embracing God's loving control over our circumstances during the winter seasons of life.

James McDonald pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, Illinois provides this pastoral observation concerning the sovereignty of God:

God's sovereignty is first painful, then slowly powerful, and only over much time seen to be profitable. (James MacDonald, *Gripped by the Greatness of God*, 66).

There are three thoughts we should consider when looking at the sovereignty of God. First, the sovereignty of God is necessary to His existence.



### **The Sovereignty of God is necessary to His existence.**

"God's display of His sovereignty is scary sometimes, but only because it's so not like us. Sovereignty is all about being God." (James MacDonald, *Gripped by the Greatness of God*, 68).

There are two conclusions this statement has as we note the necessity of His sovereignty to His existence. The first conclusion is that God has no equal.

#### **God has no equal**

"Then he said, "Tomorrow." So he said, "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God" (Exod. 8:10).

"For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth" (Exod. 9:14).

Nothing created compares to God. Man is like God in that he bears His image, but man is not God.

The second conclusion is that God has no superior.

**God has no superior**

“I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me” (Isa. 45:5).

<sup>9</sup> “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’” (Isa. 46:9, 10).

God’s  
purposes  
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In saying God has no equal, it can be equally said that God has no superior. There is no authority over God. God’s purposes can never be trumped.

<sup>18</sup> “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’ <sup>20</sup> On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? <sup>21</sup> Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” (Rom. 9:18-21).

And although God will not be understood fully by finite man, neither can He be challenged.

“God is able to do *whatever* He pleases *whenever* He wishes.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 68).

“But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases” (Ps. 115:3).

“Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps. 135:6).

God has no competitor.

“What God plans, He delivers. What God wants, God gets – His way and His timing, on time, every time.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 69).

The second thought we should consider when looking at the sovereignty of God is that the sovereignty of God assures me that my choices are meaningful and necessary.





## **The Sovereignty of God assures me that my choices are meaningful and necessary.**

“God is the ruler of the universe, and He is the king of human history. *Nothing* happens in this world by chance.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 71).

The conclusions to this thought are two-fold.

### **The sovereignty of God eliminates random acts**

“Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, ‘Turn around and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded’” (1 Kings 22:34).

The sovereignty of God negates accidents. This is so because of the nature of what constitutes an accident. This forces us to ask the question, “What is an accident?” An accident is “an unforeseen and unintended event.” It is “anything that happens by chance without an apparent cause.” In a world ordered by God such chance happenings are incapable of unfolding. Every aspect of my life is a part of God eternal purpose.

### **The sovereignty of God eliminates unconnected activity**

“And He said to them, ‘When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters’” (Luke 22:10).

I do not think many of us actually consider how we view life. If God is not in control but rather each individual is, then one’s worldview is best represented by a pane of glass that has shattered and splintered into a million unconnected pieces.

If God, however, is in control, then life is to be viewed as a mosaic or multi-pieced puzzle that has a singular over-arching picture comprised of a million distinct though connected parts.

If God is in control, then life is to be viewed as a mosaic or multi-pieced puzzle that has a singular over-arching picture comprised of a million distinct though connected parts.

The season we call winter is an intentional and connected part of God’s singular over-arching picture. If for no other reason, winter makes us appreciate the other three seasons of life.

The third thought we should consider when looking at the sovereignty of God is that the sovereignty of God provides me comfort in hardship and assurance in calamity.



## **The Sovereignty of God provides me comfort in hardship and assurance in calamity.**

When I find my world collapsing around me, how do I find emotional stability and spiritual rest?

### **In the midst of emotional instability God assures me that He is in control**

What is emotion? Emotion is the language of a person's non-physical state of being. Emotion describes for us non-tangible expressions of our spiritual existence.

When you ask someone how they are doing, they might respond by saying, "I feel sick." There are two ways of understanding that one statement. Physically, they might have a head-cold or a stomach ache. It is an organic problem. Or we might understand them to mean that they have just received some information or are wrestling with a certain issue that has made them sick with worry or anxiety.

Because of physical ailment or fatigue we can find ourselves emotionally drained or spent. What does this mean?

It means that we have overloaded our circuit breakers and have blown a fuse. No more power is running to the outlets. You can do whatever you like but until you reset the circuit breaker no power will be forthcoming. You reset the circuit breaker by embracing the control of God in the midst of your emotional upheaval. Somehow in ways that cannot be understood, God is in control.

### **In the midst of my circumstantial uncertainty God assures me that He is in control**

Our previous thought dealt with emotional instability. This idea deals with circumstantial uncertainty. Both of these thoughts work in tandem since one often leads to the other.

What happens when everything around you collapses? Every day our daily news stations report of new calamities visiting the world. Even in our own world, people lose their jobs and financial needs become tantamount. Death

often comes as an unwelcome intrusion into families. People's lives are completely turned upside-down and the familiar is utterly removed.

Again, we are called to remember Scripture. I will note only three passages. All are biographical. I would like to simply note the individual and then the appropriate passage.

1. Joseph (Genesis 50:19-21)

<sup>19</sup> “But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. <sup>21</sup> So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them” (Gen. 50:19-21).

2. Job (Job 1:20-22)

<sup>20</sup> “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. <sup>21</sup> He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ <sup>22</sup> Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (Job 1:20-22).

3. The early disciples (Acts 5:40-42; [Paul and Silas] Acts 16:22-25)

<sup>40</sup> “They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. <sup>41</sup> So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:40-42).

From the experiences of our faith predecessors, it is possible to be faced with circumstantial uncertainty and still find joy in God. A key to having this happen is to see God controlling the moment/event.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is considered the greatest theologian produced on American soil. In the Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards he penned these words,

“God's absolute sovereignty and justice . . . is what my mind seems to rest assured of. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a *delightful* conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.” (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1:lv).

Many of us are familiar with Corrie ten Boom. Listen to the following testimony she shares concerning the sovereignty of God.

“Before Corrie’s sister Betsie died, she had described God’s sovereignty in a way that changed Corrie forever. I don’t know why God allows suffering, Corrie; all I know is across the blueprint of our lives, God wrote the word *Ravensbruck* . . . Tell them, Corrie – tell them that no pit is so deep that God’s love is not deeper still. They will listen to you because we have been here.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 82).

“Corrie later said, ‘The higher the view we have of His sovereignty – that our times are in His hands – the greater will be the possibility to live in His victory.’” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 82).

James MacDonald concludes his study of God’s sovereignty with the following thoughts:

“When you willingly take from God’s hand whatever He allows, believing that eternity will prove His wisdom and goodness even though you can’t see it now, you are embracing sovereignty at the deepest level. And you are preparing your life for a joy so immense that few ever truly experience it. (83, 84). If that truth does not comfort you, it is because you are still fighting a way you can never win. When you embrace that fully in the deepest part of who you are, only then do you know what it means to be gripped by the sovereignty of God.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 86, 87).

“Our only real choice is whether we are for Him or against Him. And amazingly He can work His purposes regardless of the choice we make.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 72). “You can harden your heart and refuse the sovereign purposes of God that will one day prove good, or you can run to Him and participate in the blessing God has planned.” (James MacDonald, Gripped by the Greatness of God, 79).

In light of these three thoughts on the sovereignty of God, what should my response be?

1. Stop trying to figure out how to resolve the problem. Not everything the infinite God does is capable of being understood by finite man.
2. Trust God to be God. He is God and you are not.
3. Rest in His control. Either He is in control or something or someone else is. The alternative is very unpleasant.
4. Be still implies slowing down. Stop trying to do everything yourself.
5. Most of the time where you find yourself is bigger than you. Not everything that happens is about you. You and I are pieces of a much larger whole.

We know what God can do, but we do not know what God will do.

Can God heal the sick? Can God restore fallen relationships? Can God remove addictions that take what is good and replace what is best? Can God give me contentment and joy in Him in the midst of circumstances that are difficult and even horrible? Can I have real unbridled joy in this life? Can I really mount up with wings as eagles?

Today we need to repent, not of our sin, but of our unbelief in God that led us to this sin. We have chosen sin because we do not believe that He is enough in this life and in the life to come. This is our besetting sin.

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Friends, we need a fresh visitation from God that shakes us to the core of our being and sets our sights on Him, putting us in hot pursuit of Him. A pursuit that places Him above all programs, methods, comforts, and sensual stimulations.

Such a visitation from God comes only when we see what we already have, hear what has already been spoken, and touch what is already held. There is nothing more to have than what we already possess. Jesus Christ is enough for this life and for the life to come. Embracing the sovereignty of God in the details of life clears our vision so that we might rest in this glorious truth.

Let us close with the following illustration.

Mowing God's Lawn (by Bruce Foggerty)

I pushed my little plastic mower around the yard of my universe trying to help God mow. God didn't need my help, but he let me tag along anyway and let me feel important. Back and forth I labored in neat little rows wasting the years, oblivious to the absence of any real motor or cutting blade in my toy machine.

I made rumbling sounds to heighten the sense of my importance and occasionally emptied my press clippings bag of imaginary accomplishments.

Lawn finished, I attacked the hard edges of my life with my imaginary toy weed eater, hacking at perceived problems that had sprouted on my landscape. And, the Great I AM, softly chuckled, when I finally ceased struggling, as at last I realized he had long ago installed astro-turf.

May it please God to help us see His hand in all things and may we rest knowing He is in control of our winter seasons.

# 2

## **When Winter Comes And the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ**

### **Why am I teaching this?**

Because we live in a performance based acceptance culture and everything is conditional, we have allowed this same mindset to mold our thinking and it has mutated into something that is frightening.

The Devil wants us to believe that our winter seasons are the result of failure on our part — a failure to measure up to what we perceive to be God’s ideals. A failure to “win victory over persistent sins” which the Devil delights to jam our faces into.

### **What is the biblical idea?**

Who I am before the Father is based solely on who Christ is, what He has done, and who I now am in Him. Nothing I do can undo what He has done. What I receive by grace is not maintained by works.

I find it tragic that on top of all we encounter in life, we pile on the already unbearable load, the responsibility to maintain our relationship with God.

Because we fail to embrace the finished work of Christ on the cross, our vertical relationship with God is deemed fragile, brittle, and breakable. Nothing is further from the truth.

### **How will they best hear it?**

When we find ourselves struggling spiritually, how are we to find comfort and rest? I would suggest that we must first make sure we lay hold of what we know to be true and not base our thoughts on how we feel. Dealing with your feelings is one thing; having to deal with a skewed view of God is another thing altogether different. We have made our relationship with God something that is tentative and iffy. We live as if we are capable of undoing what God has done.

Do we really believe the cross-work of Christ was sufficient? Or are we willing to see it as deficient? I can embrace my winter season only as I see God's sovereignty and His Son's sacrifice.

This chapter addresses the issue of Jesus' sacrifice and the winter seasons of life. There are four thoughts we should consider when looking at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. First, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ assures me that I am right with the Father during my winter seasons.



## **The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ assures me that I am right with the Father during my winter seasons (Rom. 3:21-26).**

<sup>21</sup> “But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. <sup>22</sup> **We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins.** And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. <sup>23</sup> For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> Yet now **God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty.** He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. <sup>25</sup> For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. **We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood,** sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times. <sup>26</sup> And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus” (Rom. 3:21-26).

### **Defining the Word**

What exactly does the word “justification” mean? The word itself means, “to declare righteous.” The Reformation in the 1500's was fought over whether or not it meant “to declare” or “to make.” Protestants believe it means, “to declare.”

Consider the following explanations of justification by several theologians:

“The doctrine of justification means then that in God's sight the ungodly man, now ‘in Christ,’ has perfectly kept the moral law of God, which also means in turn that ‘in Christ’ he has perfectly loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself.” “The moment the sinner, through faith in Jesus Christ, turns away from every human resource and rests in Christ alone, the Father imputes his well-beloved Son's perceptive (active) obedience to him and

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accepts him as righteous in his sight.” (Robert L. Reymond, An Introduction to the Christian Faith, 742, 747)

“To be justified means more than to be declared ‘not guilty.’ It actually means to be declared *righteous* before God. It means God has *imputed* or charged the guilt of our sin to His Son, Jesus Christ, and has *imputed* or credited Christ’s righteousness to us.” (Jerry Bridges, Transforming Grace, c1991, 36).

Romans 1:18-3:20 declares me to be wrong whereas now (3:22) I am declared to be right. How or why can such a transaction be true? It is true because of my standing in Him by grace alone through faith alone. What changed? My position changed. Being declared right before the Father was not based on personal merit. It was freely done by His grace.

### **Looking at it Biblically**

In a positional sense, we are what Christ is. The practical outworking of this is the putting on of the new and the putting off the old by the renewing of one’s mind (Eph. 4:22-24). In so doing our Lord will be seen in our earthen vessels. It is, in this sense, that *we* are righteous. In truth, it is His righteousness being seen in and through us. This is what is referred to in Ephesians 5:9 and Philippians 1:11.

“(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Eph. 5:9)

“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

Our righteousness is actually the outworking of His righteousness in us. It is as I become aware of what He is that I am desirous of putting on those qualities that will reveal Christ to others through me (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16).

“But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11).

“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16)

### **What are the implications of such a thought?**

“Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner – **while he is still in a sinning state**” (Swindoll, Grace Awakening, 24).

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In my practice, I am still as wrong as I was in Romans 1:18-3:20. Now even though my practice has not changed, my standing before God has. I am right with God. Whereas before I was wrong (1:18-3:20), now I am right (3:21-26). Nothing can affect this “rightness with God.” Nothing I did caused it, and nothing I can do will cancel it. I can never through my actions undo what Christ alone has done.

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If justification is seen in light of the context within Romans, then to be right with God is to be justified. To become non-right is to undermine the truth of justification by faith. To call Christians to get right with God is theologically inaccurate. Your “rightness” with God is not based on your ability to perform or obey but on your position in Christ.

It is impossible not to be right with God. You did nothing to merit it and you can do nothing to maintain it. To think your sin makes you not right is to fail to see the scope of your sinful condition. To think your obedience makes you right is to fail to see the scope of your justification. How can God declare me righteous and treat me as such and now treat me as unrighteous?

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of your justification.

“It’s no wonder so many believers walk around seeing themselves as ‘sinners.’ They are double-minded about their standing before God – especially when they visit church on Sunday and are reminded to **‘get right with God.’** As James 1:8 says, ‘A double-minded man [is] unstable in all he does,’ and this lack of understanding about the finality of the cross is spiritual instability” (George, Faith That Pleases God, 178).

The question concerning sinful acts by the Christian will be addressed later. Yet such actions on your part cannot change your “rightness” with God. In the doctrine of justification by faith your rightness with God has been forever settled. It is as certain as His Son.

Justification or being right with God is not based on how you feel. Too many believers live their daily lives based on their feelings. As such, they experience little of the joy of being justified. You might feel like a failure because of your inability to measure up to all the commands in the New Testament. You might feel distant and alienated from God because of your sin nature. But the FACT of the matter is, “You are right with God because you have been justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.” Nothing can alter this glorious truth.

When I find myself spiritually exhausted and incapable of lifting a finger for Him, God is still declaring me righteous. My right standing before the Father is not based on who I am, but on who He is and what He has done in my behalf.

How many times have you felt righteous before the Father, and on what basis did you feel righteous? Chances are you felt righteous because you believed you did something that made God happy. How many times have you felt unrighteous before the Father, and on what basis did you feel unrighteous? Chances are you felt unrighteous because you believed you did something that made God angry.

God's attitude toward you is not like that of a person having a mid-life crisis, where you have no idea as to what is going on and everything is tentative and everyone is walking on eggshells.

What you have  
with the Father  
because of the Son  
is bedrock.

What you have with the Father because of the Son is bedrock. The sacrifice of His Son is the solid rock that underlies all the soil, sand, clay, gravel and loose material that is on the surface of your life.

The second thought we should consider when looking at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is that His sacrifice assures me that I have access before the Father during my winter seasons.



**The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ assures me that I have access before the Father during my winter seasons (Heb. 4:14-16; Rom. 5:1, 2).**

<sup>14</sup> “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. <sup>2</sup> Because of our faith, **Christ has brought us into this place of highest**

**privilege where we now stand**, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory" (Rom. 5:1, 2).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ results in peace with God, access to God, and boldness before God. (Rom. 5:1, 2, 5, 9; 8:30, 33, 34)

Because of justification, I have peace with God and an unconditional access into His presence. Such peace and access are the result of Christ's work in my behalf. Tied into this great truth is that of our reconciliation. Whereas once I was alienated from God, I now have access to God. Because the gulf has been spanned, and I am now reconciled to God, I have fellowship with Him.

There was nothing I could do to merit it and there is nothing I can do to maintain it.

To have peace and access is a result of grace. I could never have gained it through self-effort. Why would I believe that my actions bar my access and rob my peace? Do you ever believe you have been barred from finding favor with God? Do you believe your access before the Father is maintained by what you do or fail to do? Friend, it is time for us to once more embrace the theology of Romans.

My justification results in peace with God. I am no longer in a state of fear. I no longer tremble at my inability to measure up to God's unattainable standard. As a Christian, my depravity might want to control you and "lord" it over you. I might wish for you to feel guilty and inadequate, but God who stands in my corner as my advocate (1 John 2:1, 2) asks those who would, "who shall lay anything to the charge of my elect whom I have declared righteous? Who is there among you that can condemn those whom I have freed?" The answer? NO ONE! I am free! Gloriously free! Jesus paid it all and now all to HIM I owe!

Do we realize that right now, at this very moment, you and I can enter into the Father's presence without having to jump through various hoops or clear multiple hurdles?

During my winter seasons, I can come with full confidence and complete freedom into the Father's presence.

During my winter seasons, I can come with full confidence and complete freedom into the Father's presence.

The third thought we should consider when looking at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is that His sacrifice assures me that I am the object of His unconditional love during my winter seasons.



**The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ assures me that  
I am the object of His unconditional love  
during my winter seasons (Rom. 8:35-39).**

<sup>35</sup> **“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’ <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

What does unconditional love look like? Let us read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

<sup>4</sup> “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

This is a picture of Jesus Christ. Can you not hear Romans 5:6-10?

<sup>6</sup> “For while we were still helpless, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly.** <sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.** <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:6-10).

It is a tragedy of immeasurable proportions that some people have lived their entire lives and have never known unconditional love. In the absence of unconditional love, all relationships will fail whether they are between a husband and wife, parents and children, or in the context of a local church family.

During your winter season know this, God loves you unconditionally.

During your winter season know this, God loves you unconditionally. There is nothing I have to do or have done that will make Him love me any less or more than what He already does. Wow!

The final thought we should consider when looking at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is that His sacrifice assures me that I am not the object of His wrath, I will not face condemnation, and I will never be scorned by Him during my winter seasons.



**The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ assures me that I am not the object of His wrath, I will not face condemnation, and I will never be scorned by Him during my winter seasons.**

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ frees me from sin and the wrath of God against it. (Rom. 5:9; 6:7 [“freed” = “justified”])

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:9).

“for he who has died is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7).

**Defining the Word**

The word “propitiation” has to do with anger and wrath. Only God is propitiated. He is wrathful against the sinner’s sin. To propitiate means, “to placate, satisfy, or appease.”

God is angry with the sinner. The sinner is the object of God’s wrath (John 3:36).

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

The death of Jesus Christ placates the wrath of God against the sinner. The sufficiency of His death satisfies the justice of God against sin.

**Looking at the word Biblically**

The root word has three expressions (*hilaskomai*, *hilasmos*, *hilasterion*). Note the following passages where these three words are found:

“And he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

*God sustains us during the winter seasons of life*

“Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25).

“And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the **mercy-seat**; of which we cannot now speak particularly” (Heb. 9:5).

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be **merciful** to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** (KJV – reconciliation) for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

**What are the implications of such truth?**

If the death of Christ sufficiently and effectually removes the object of God’s wrath thus placating His anger and satisfying His justice, then God can never be angry with me again.

“Where did we pick up the idea that God is mad or irritated? Knowing that *all* of God’s wrath was poured out on His Son at His death on the cross, how can we think like that? As a matter of fact, the reason He brought Jesus back from the grave is that He was satisfied with His Son. Ponder this: If the Father is satisfied with His Son’s full payment for sin, and we are in His Son, by grace through faith, then *He is satisfied with you and me*. How long must Christians lie before we finally believe that?” (Swindoll, Grace Awakening, 61, 62).

We will never face God’s anger. God will never be angry with those who participate in the propitiating work of Christ before the Father.

“It isn’t possible for a Christian to cause God to become angry. ‘There is nothing you can do that will make Him mad – nothing!’” (McVey, Grace Rules, c1998, 148).

“The truth was that she was pleasing to God already, and she was to work not for His favor, but because she already had it.” (Wells, Sidetracked, 82).

We have lived so long in bondage that we have to learn how to live as free men. We sin so naturally that we must learn how to live in righteousness just as we have lived in sin.

My winter season is not His sentence against me. I am not being judged by the Father. His judgment against me has been fully met in the cross. There is not now, nor ever will be, any condemnation from God upon His people no matter how poorly they perform or how miserably they fail. Can you imagine the tremendous release this can bring to those who are downtrodden and lost in their winter season?

Application: (Where do we go from here?)

Do we really know what it is like to rest in the finished work of Christ and then to relate to God based on this work?

Listen to the following story and note the parallel between what we have in Christ and how we currently live:

In 1826, two men, last names Porter and Wilson, were sentenced to be hanged by the state of Pennsylvania for mail robbery and murder. Porter was hanged first in July 1830. Three weeks later, President Andrew Jackson pardoned Wilson, the second perpetrator. The death sentence was lifted.

The presidential pardon was sent to the governor of Pennsylvania and then to the warden of the penitentiary where George Wilson was incarcerated. There the message was given to the condemned man.

But Wilson stunned everyone by refusing the pardon, even though he knew it meant the death penalty would be carried out. The officials didn't know what to do. The case took three years to resolve.

The case ended up in the U. S. Supreme Court. In rendering the court's decision, Chief Justice John Marshall said, "A pardon is an act of grace which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed from the punishment of the law. A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. It has NO VALUE apart from that which the receiver gives to it. George Wilson has refused to accept the pardon. We cannot conceive why he would do so, but he has. Therefore, George Wilson must die." As a result, George Wilson was hanged even though a pardon had been offered. He had made his choice.

Everything we have considered concerning the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is true. It is all ours, and all we have to "do" is to receive it by faith. If we refuse to take it by faith, we will fail to enjoy all that is already true. Just like Wilson, we will die when life was available.

# 3

## **When Winter Comes and the Supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people.**

This chapter, along with the previous two chapters, shows us that the entire Trinity is for us. Each one according to their specific ministry calls us to comfort and rest. In chapter one, we looked at our winter seasons and the sovereignty of God. God is the one, who like Jesus, leads us into our winter seasons. In chapter two, we noted our winter seasons and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. **No matter what we are feeling God looks upon us with unconditional love because of His Son's substitutionary and sacrificial death in behalf of His people.** Now let us consider our winter seasons and the supplication of the Holy Spirit.

### **Why am I teaching this?**

Many of us have this fuzzy idea that the Holy Spirit is an enabler, that we are to cooperate with Him and in so doing we succeed. And to the degree to which we yield to Him or are filled by Him to that same degree we are living the victorious Christian life. We see Him much like a spotter in weight lifting. He is there making sure we do not hurt ourselves and to help us only if our strength fails. I do not believe the Holy Spirit is an enabler, but a doer. In His absence, nothing gets done. In His presence, He is completing the work He began.

As all of you know when you own a home sooner or later the home begins to own you. A couple of winters ago, I received a snow blower. After a few problematic beginnings, it stopped running. I tried everything I knew to fix it. Finally, I had to call in an expert. He came to my house and the first thing he did was check the fuel tank. It was bone dry. He put fuel in the tank and it started right up. I pretty much had to eat humble pie and look incredibly stupid but I did learn a valuable lesson in what to do if my engine stops running. **CHECK THE FUEL TANK FIRST.** The word picture is not exact, but it does say this much. He is the fuel that drives this engine.



### **What is the biblical idea?**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is ours to enjoy. Most of us are woefully negligent in our knowledge of Him. Yet, our ignorance does not negate who He is or what He does in behalf of His people in fulfillment of the Father's promises to His people.

I am woefully ignorant of how the human body works. Often times I neglect it and mistreat it, but it keeps on working even in the absence of conscious choice. This is equally true and more so concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Who He is and what He does is not conditioned on what I know and how I respond. His ministry to me and through me is often done in the absence of conscious choice. Yet He does it nonetheless and for this we should be immensely grateful.

The ministry of the  
Holy Spirit  
is ours to enjoy.

### **How will they best hear it?**

Now let us address the issue of the Holy Spirit's Supplication in behalf of His people and the winter seasons of life. There are three aspects of the Holy Spirit's supplication that sustain us during winter seasons. The first is that the supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people assures me of God's unconditional love during my winter seasons.



## **The Supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people assures me of God's unconditional love during my winter seasons (Rom. 5:1-5).**

**“and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”**  
(Rom. 5:5).

The active agent in making us the recipients of God's unconditional love is the Holy Spirit. It is a part of His ongoing ministry to us to make sure we know that we are unconditionally loved by the Father.

**“This pouring out of God's love is done through the Holy Spirit.** The thought is that of an action of the Spirit of God on our human spirits. The Spirit is given (the aorist indicates a single, decisive act), which reminds us that this is not a human achievement or insight.” (Morris, Romans, 221).

“He does not send His love as dew drops, nor in light showers as the rain, but like a flood does His love pour in upon the thirsty believer.” (McBeth, Romans, 151).

The word used for “poured out” means, “to gush out.” It is used six times in the New Testament. Perhaps the most graphic usage of the word can be found in Acts 1:18 to describe the “splitting open of Judas” bowels and having them gush all over the ground. The imagery is of an overflowing and excessive outpouring.

“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, **he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out**” (Acts 1:18).

The ministry of the Holy Spirit to the people of God uses the same word (Acts 2:17, 18 and 10:45). God the Father has poured out on His people the Holy Spirit. This outpouring is excessive. It overflows its boundaries. The perfect tense describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated. But the consequences of that action continue to this day.

When the Father did this, the accompanying consequence was an assurance of His unconditional love. The Holy Spirit intercedes in our behalf making sure that the lies of the Devil do not stick. He is actively washing our minds in order to renew our thinking. He wants us to live free.

You and I have grounds for hope in God because the Spirit of God brings with Him the love of God that gushes within His people.

Why is it that we often do not feel loved by God? The reason, I believe, is because everything around us is attacking this idea. Our culture is all about measuring up and about conformity. No charge raised by things created can ever make us any less the object of God’s deepest affection and good will.

The second aspect is that the supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people assures me of God’s intimate love during my winter seasons.



**The Supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people assures me of God’s intimate love during my winter seasons (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6).**

<sup>15</sup> “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ <sup>16</sup> **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God**” (Rom. 8:15, 16).

“Because you are sons, God has sent forth **the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’**” (Gal. 4:6).

The word “Abba” is an Aramaic word for father. “The word itself was originally derived from baby-language” (NIDNTT, 1:614). It was typically used by a child when addressing their own parent. As the word was used it extended beyond that of a baby to that of a son or daughter. It contains the warmth and bond of “Dear Dad.” Jesus used the term when addressing God. “Papa” might be the best translation in English. [www.religioustolerance.org/gl\\_a.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/gl_a.htm)

The word “Abba” occurs only three times in the New Testament (Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). “In the other Greek literature of early Christianity it is found only in quotations of these passages. Nowhere in the entire wealth of devotional literature produced by ancient Judaism do we find **Abba** being used as a way of addressing God.” (NIDNTT, 1:614).

You and I, having been adopted through Christ as sons, have the same authority as Christ in crying out to God as Abba. It is through regeneration that we enter into a relationship with the Father that was previously only known and experienced by His only begotten Son. He is our “Father.”

Abba is a term of endearment. It is a word used only by family of family. How many of you have grandchildren? How many of you are called something special by your grandchildren? That term is a term of sweet nothings. It is between you and them. Other people do not call you the name and if they did, it would not mean the same.

The ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit within us testifies to our sonship before the Father. The third aspect is that the supplication of the Holy Spirit in behalf of His people assures me of God’s attentive love during my winter seasons.



**The Supplication of the Holy Spirit  
in behalf of His people assures me of God’s attentive  
love during my winter seasons (Rom. 8:26, 27).**

<sup>26</sup> “In the same way the Spirit also **helps our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words**; <sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows

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what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26, 27).

The Holy Spirit is taking our feeble attempts, or lack therein, before the Father and causing to come to pass the will of God in and through our lives during our winter seasons.

This intercessory work is conditioned on only one thing: “Are you His child?” After the relationship is established, then His work in our behalf is unconditional.

He helps us. John describes the work of the Spirit with the word “comforter.” John is the only one who uses this word and of the five times it is used four refer to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and once to Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1).

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

“But the **Comforter**, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

“But when the **Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the **Comforter** will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The word comforter means, “One called alongside to help.”

“It is the kind of help a doctor gives when he is called alongside the sick bed; the kind of help a fireman gives when he is called alongside a burning building; the kind of help a lawyer gives when he is called alongside to undertake our case.” (Phillips, Romans, 133).

He helps us when we are weak. In our infirmity, our disease, our sickness, our inability, He is helping us. What kind of help does He provide for His people? He is interceding in our behalf before the throne of grace.

His prayers in behalf of His people are effective. They are effective for three reasons.

- **First**, God knows and searches our hearts as only He can.
- **Second**, God knows the Spirit's mind.
- **Finally**, the Spirit prays according to the will of God.

The word intercedes is a compound word. It takes the word meaning "to chance upon or to deliver" and puts a prefix of high octane into its tank. It is the only time this word occurs in the New Testament. The root word is found in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 to describe the intercessory ministry of Christ in behalf of His people.

"who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, **who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us**" (Rom. 8:34).

"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**" (Heb. 7:25).

Right now as a Christian we are in a huge "win-win" situation. Right now the second and third persons of the Trinity are interceding in behalf of their people before the throne of the Father. And what does that throne look like right now?

<sup>14</sup> "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the **throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need**" (Heb. 4:14-16).

There is a throne of grace upon which the Father sits and before whom the Son and the Holy Spirit intercede in behalf of their people to secure for them mercy and grace to help them in their time of need. Listen carefully to the words of "Before the Throne of God Above" written by Charitie L. Bancroft in 1863.

### **Before the throne of God above**

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea.  
A great high Priest whose Name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on His hands,  
My name is written on His heart.  
I know that while in Heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

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When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.  
Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free.  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,  
My perfect spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I AM,  
King of glory and of grace,  
One in Himself I cannot die.  
My soul is purchased by His blood,  
My life is hid with Christ on high,  
With Christ my Savior and my God!

During our winter seasons, God can seem distant and at times forgotten. But the Holy Spirit is praying for us so that what is necessary is taking place.

God has not left the completion of His work in and through His people in the hands of His people. In ways that are unexplainable, God is working in and through His people both to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Listen to the words of 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

<sup>7</sup> “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup> we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you. <sup>13</sup> But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, <sup>14</sup> knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. <sup>15</sup> For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things

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which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal”  
(2 Cor. 4:7-18).

Oh friend, there is awaiting you glory. But until the day you arrive at your eternal home, how do you endure? By not looking at those things which are temporal but by looking at that which is eternal. God is in control, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has made sure that all you need before the Father you have and right now the second and third members of the Godhead are interceding in your behalf before the throne of grace in order that they might secure for you grace in your time of need.

APPLICATION: (What’s next?)

These truths do not fix broken bones and bleeding hearts, but they do assure you that your situation is not the result of God’s judgment against you.

In January of 2005, I had major surgery. The experience, though necessary, was not pleasant. When I came out of the anesthetic, my heart began to race and I was not feeling very well. Throughout my stay in the hospital, my wife was at my side. There was nothing she could do, but her presence was a soothing comfort, and when I struggled she simply squeezed my hand. That squeeze assured me that we would get through this and that everything was okay.

My prayer for you today is that as you live in your winter season God the Holy Spirit would squeeze your hand, and thus assure you that you will get through it, and that everything will be okay.



## **When Winter Comes and the Sufficiency of Scripture**

There is an old proverb: You don't miss your water until your well runs dry.

Spiritual vitality keeps us hydrated while pilgrims in this desert land. Perhaps today your well is dry and you do not yet know it. My desire in this study is two-fold: first, to protect ourselves from spiritual dehydration, and secondly, to determine if we are spiritually dehydrated.

Jesus said He is the living water, the living bread, the way, the truth, the life. He said He is the vine, and those who partake of Him will no never thirst or hunger again. Yet, here I find myself dry as dust with a parched throat and no water in sight. What am I to do when the well runs dry?

### **Why am I teaching this?**

Michael J. Vlach wrote an article of interest entitled, "Americans and the Bible: Bible Ownership, Reading, Study, and Knowledge in the United States."

In it he notes how,

"Most Americans own a Bible. In fact, 92% of households in America own at least one copy. Of those households that own a Bible, the average number of Bibles is three. This includes not only the homes of practicing Christians but hundreds of thousands of atheists as well.

Although most Americans own a Bible, use of the Bible varies significantly. In a poll taken by the Gallup Organization in October, 2000, 59% of Americans reported that they read the Bible at least occasionally. This is down from 73% in the 1980s. The percentage of Americans who read the Bible at least once a week is 37%. This is down slightly from 40% in 1990.

When it comes to going beyond merely reading the Bible to actual study of the Bible, the numbers decline sharply. Only one in seven Americans report an involvement that goes beyond just reading the Bible. Fourteen percent of Americans currently belong to a Bible study group.



If this information is true, then Christians are spiritually dehydrated.

### **What is the biblical ideal?**

The Westminster Confession reads as follows in chapter one concerning the Holy Scripture:

“It pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and **for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary**; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.”

The parallels between our physical well-being and our spiritual well-being are tremendous. As the people of God we must hydrate our spiritual bodies with the cool clear water of God or we will dry up and seek satisfaction outside the Scripture.

Many within any given fellowship do not read the Scripture regularly. For some the only Scriptural intake they have is on Sunday mornings and then they find it either too long or too hard. The problem is that we are spiritually dehydrated and we have gotten to the point of having to sip instead of drink in the Word of God.

There are at least five pictures describing the Word of God and each one gives us suggestions as to what that Word is to be for us. The first word picture describes the Bible as a nourishing food during our winter seasons.



### **The Bible is described as a nourishing food during my winter seasons (Job 23:12; Ps. 119:103; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2).**

“I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth **more than my necessary food**” (Job 23:12).

The word “treasured” is the same word “hid” in Psalm 119:11. The idea is that of value, of esteem. We place such a high premium on the Word of God that we gather it like we would gold or silver. In fact, our estimation of it is so significant that we view it to be greater than our daily food allotment.

*God sustains us during the winter seasons of life*

“They are **more desirable than gold**, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (Ps. 19:10).

“**How sweet are Your words** to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103).

The word “desire” is the same word used of a man’s desire for a woman (Sol. 2:3; Prov. 6:25). The language employed by Scripture is so picturesque. The Word of God takes precedence over financial security and physical appetites.

“Your words were found and I ate them, And **Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart**; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16).

When the prophet Jeremiah received the Word from the Lord, it was to him joy and the delight of his heart. There was a sense of gratification and celebration in having the Word of God.

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD’” (Matt. 4:4).

“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).

When confronted by physical appetites our Lord’s appeal was to the Word of God. We can no more live without spiritual food than we can live without physical food. As believers, there is to be a thirsting after the Word of God. We should want to read it, study it, hear it, and live it. If we do not have the desire for the Word, then we need to beg God to create within us that desire.

During our winter seasons we need to be feeding on the Word of God for our spiritual nourishment. We cannot afford to distance ourselves from the Word of God. The second word picture describes the Bible as a guiding light during our winter seasons.



## **The Bible is described as a guiding light during my winter seasons (Ps. 119:105).**

“**Your word is a lamp** to my feet And a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).

Why am I here, who am I, and where am I going? Such questions as these can only be answered by the Word of God. The Word of God opens up to us the

mind of God. We know because He tells us what to know. In the absence of His Word, we walk in darkness.

Sweetwater, Tennessee, boasts the nation's biggest underground lake called the Lost Sea. The 4½-acre pool of water is about 300 feet below the cave entrance. There is more to the Lost Sea than the public can see. Divers have mapped at least nine more acres in underwater chambers leading away from the lake, but no one has found the end, even with sonar. The attraction is part of a system of caves called Craighead Caverns, named for an Indian chief who lived in the early 1800s.

When you are standing in your group and the tour guide shuts off all the lights you just about go bonkers. I do not know if you have ever experienced total darkness, but if you have, it is perhaps one of the most eerie feelings you can experience. I think it is almost impossible to stay calm when consumed by complete darkness.

In the absence of His Word we stand to be consumed by the darkness. During our winter seasons we need the Word of God to dissipate the darkness that seeks to consume us. The third word picture describes the Bible as a cleansing agent during our winter seasons.



**The Bible is described as a cleansing agent  
during my winter seasons  
(Ps. 119:9, 11; John 15:3; 17:17; Eph. 5:26).**

<sup>9</sup> “How can a young man keep his way pure? **By keeping it according to Your word.** <sup>11</sup> Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You” (Ps. 119:9, 11).

**“You are already clean because of the word** which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).

**“Sanctify them in the truth;** Your word is truth” (John.17:17).

“so that He might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word**” (Eph. 5:26).

The Word of God is the primary means used by the Holy Spirit to keep us from moral defilement in our journey through life. During our winter seasons we are more susceptible to moral defilement because we slowly abandon those disciplines that God has placed for our nourishment and protection.

In the absence of the Word of God during our winter seasons what we do not realize is the slow and subtle shift that can happen with regard to our personal defilement as we live in a fallen world. The Word of God is there to protect us from this moral defilement.

The fourth word picture describes the Bible as a saving power during our winter seasons.



### **The Bible is described as a saving power during my winter seasons (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power** of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

<sup>15</sup> “and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are **able** to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

The power that saves is the same power that sanctifies. The words “power” and “able” come from the word we have transliterated into English as “dynamite.” The original word carries this idea, “the power or ability to accomplish the stated goal or task.” The Word of God is the means God has established for the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of saints. It converts *and* cleanses.

During our winter seasons the Word of God is a powerful companion. The fifth word picture describes the Bible as a protective weapon during our winter seasons.



### **The Bible is described as a protective weapon during my winter seasons (Eph. 6:17).**

“And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

We see this same principle with our Lord when tempted by the Devil (Matt. 4).

*God sustains us during the winter seasons of life*

The Word of God, when used skillfully, is a protective weapon. Spiritual dehydration happens in the absence of the Word's nourishing components. The God of the Word has given us His Word in order that we might have always before us a nourishing food, a guiding light, a cleansing agent, a saving power, and a protective weapon. He has not left us to ourselves. The Holy Spirit is always finishing the work begun by the Father (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

The Bible is not a formula for "spiritual success." The Bible is a picture of Jesus Christ. It is not the paper and ink that sustains us during our winter seasons. It is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is my nourishing food; Jesus Christ is my guiding light; Jesus Christ is my cleansing agent; Jesus Christ is my saving power; and Jesus Christ is my protective weapon.

Our study of the Bible is driven by the desire to see Him in and through the text. If for no other reason, our winter seasons exist to show us the value of Jesus Christ. He is all satisfying and sufficient.

"When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."  
(Benjamin Franklin [1706-1790] Poor Richard's 1746 Almanac)

## **A FINAL WORD**

Winter seasons are a part of all Christian experiences. They exist and are to be embraced as a part of God's purpose for His people. When we find ourselves in a winter season we are able to stay hydrated when we understand four areas that are foundational.

### 1. The Sovereignty of God.

God is in control of every moment of every day. Nothing comes my way that He has not ordered. Knowing this to be true allows me to rest in my winter season because He is the one who has brought me here and His purpose is larger than mine.

### 2. The Sacrifice of Christ.

There is nothing I need in my winter season that I do not already have in Him. He is enough in this life and in the life to come. Even in my circumstantial deficiency, He is all I need.

### 3. The Supplication of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is my everlasting comforter. He is living the Christian life in me and through me and for me. He is my intercessor.

### 4. The Sufficiency of Scripture.

The Word of God is revealing to me the picture of Jesus Christ. He is the one through the text of Scripture who sustains me during my winter seasons.

Earlier I prayed, "May it please the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to these four mind renewing and life transforming truths." I am trusting God that He has answered my prayer.