

I awoke early this morning and was on my back porch after recording this song. The moon was partially covered by the clouds floating past it. As I thought about how we reflect God's love to others, as the moon reflects the sun, the clouds cleared and the moon shined so bright it almost hurt my eyes. Then the strangest thing happened - a circular rainbow of sorts surrounded the brightest moon I have ever seen. Brilliant and reassuring. Love always prevails.

The Bible verses from this mornings devotional by Sarah Young (Jesus Calling):

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."—Deuteronomy 31:6

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

—1 Peter 3:4

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

—2 Corinthians 4:6-7

But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me!

—2 Corinthians 12:9 amp

Holden really liked this song. It is a meditation on the fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and now sits at the right hand side of God.

1 Peter 3:20-22

King James Version (KJV)

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the

ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

I pray that you had a restful sleep,

Psalm 73:23-24 (King James Version)

23Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

24Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

When we meet times of turbulence, trials, and tribulation, we only have to remind ourselves that the Lord of this universe holds our right hand. Suffer though we might, the promise of "glory" is always there. Have a blessed weekend,

I don't usually mix politics and my faith, but the recent decision to legalize marijuana in Washington and Colorado disturbs me. It is an entrance drug and usually leads to the use of more powerful substances. These can only harm you physically and spiritually.

Is there Biblical evidence for it's use? The modern american religious cults named groups including the Rastas that believe so. But they are cults, not Holy Spirit filled Christians.

Those Christians who say its use is Bible based use the following verses:

Genesis Chapter 1:29 "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

1:30 "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

1:31 "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

Is marijuana meat? Does it sustain your body. Does it feed it with nutrition?

Its use is a vice - like smoking, drinking alcohol in excess, etc. It also can cause hallucinations and is worse for your lungs than smoking.

A vice is a vice - the only thing I think the Bible addresses as not a vice is wine as Jesus turned water into wine.

We are not perfect and will sin - but the Bible does not, in my opinion, say that the use of marijuana is alright.

Seek God's direction for your life. If you need to drink, or smoke whatever for pain, that's a different story. Move to a state where medical marijuana is legal and you can get a prescription for it.

I hope your weekend is blessed,

I know that none of us is perfect. But seeking God's will for our lives is the most important thing we can do. So much of our times are spent on worldly concerns. Getting our worldly house in order instead of looking within and getting our spiritual lives in order. Often we look to others to do this for us. We look to spiritual healers or whatever. That is not staying on the narrow path. Turning all of our dreams and concerns over to the Lord is the first and foremost thing we can do. Nothing compares to this. We were not put on this world to have a fun time. We are here because God has a specific thing He wants us to accomplish. To worry about what mission God has for another and not placing your concerns on what He has in store for you is a sin. It is also a sin to place any worldly thing above the Lord and the things He needs for your to accomplish.

The more you turn to feeling better by buying stuff or by getting high or whatever, just puts a divide between you and God. Concentrate closely on what He is telling you. Stop treading water and be more action orientated for Him, not yourself. Get your family in order before you look for distractions like sports, drugs, worldly work, etc.

I write these things out of love and out of knowing I'm writing a lot of it to myself as well.

Matthew 3:11

King James Version (KJV)

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

Luke 15:7

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Romans 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

2 Timothy 2:25

King James Version (KJV)

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Hebrews 6

King James Version (KJV)

6 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands,  
and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened,  
and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made  
partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of  
the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto  
repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of  
God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft  
upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it  
is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and  
is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and  
things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and  
labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in  
that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same  
diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who  
through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could  
swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and  
multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the  
promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for  
confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Matthew 22:35-37 (New International Version)

35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

This world teaches us to value possessions, money, sports, vacations, movies, popular culture, etc. We often forget that nothing would be possible without God. And we would still be under God's law without the atonement of our sins through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. We also as a culture are guarded about spreading the gospel. We feel that if we say something that rubs someone the wrong way, even if it's truthful, that we might offend them. Speaking the truth will bring results. Sometimes anger, sometimes humor, and sometimes, if the soil is fertile, it will bring life altering change. With regards to the gospel, acceptance of the truth that is in Jesus will lead to baptism of the Holy Spirit and a relationship with the Trinity that can not be severed. Lovingly,

Ephesians 6:12-13 (New International Version)

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces

of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Jesus was born fully man and God to die for our sins. Imagine the incredible pain both He and His Father and the Holy Spirit endured during Christ's entire time on this earth. He left His perfect position of power in Heaven to redeem us. What a blessing!

This song, "Stand", is what God calls us to do in this "dark world". Ask God for the full armor of His righteousness and remember to not act out of anger, act out of love.

Recorded in mostly D minor with elements of the C major scale - makes for an interesting combination towards the second half of the song. Creativity is not always measured by staying in the confines of a specific form - sometimes leaving that confine leads to new ideas and new directions.

The song attached to this email is a meditation in D major on the following scripture:

Romans 13:10-14 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

It's plain and simple. We are to put on the armour of light and let God direct our ways to be more like His son. Don't worry about yesterday or tomorrow. Your next birthday or what you are going to this summer. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is waiting patiently for each of us to do so.

Romans 5:15-17 (New International Version)

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Note:

We shouldn't go one day without thanking the Lord for all He endured for us. His gift reconciled us to the Most High and every time I think of it, deeply contemplate it, I am brought to tears. That our Father would endure such pain watching His perfect Son scourged, nailed to a cross, and treated like an animal. He fully knew what was in store for Him. He accepted it because He loves each of us so much. What a wonderful Savior is He.

I dedicate this particular song and verses to my mom and my son - he had the flu this weekend and I got to be his nurse - what a blessing to be entrusted with his health. You can here him sniffing during the first part of the song. Instead of rerecording it, I thought I would keep it in there as a reminder of just how blessed each of us to have family and people to take care of us while we are hurting. My best,

I awoke this morning at 3am with Rich Mullins song "Awesome God" going through my head (my son's favorite song by the way). What a glorious way to start the day. I was reminded of how much the Lord loves us and how much we love the Lord. In reading the following passage, think about what God has in store for each of us when we are reunited with Him:

1 Corinthians 2:8-10 (New International Version)

8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

"What no eye has seen,  
what no ear has heard,  
and what no human mind has conceived"  
the things God has prepared for those who love him—

10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

Note:

You may think you understand the depth of love, but I would be willing to say that we will not know true love until we are reunited with the Holy Trinity. Certainly we think we comprehend what it's like to give of our self and have an emotional attachment to someone or something, but to truly understand love, one needs to contemplate Calvary and exacting what took place there. While on earth, we will not fully understand what cost was paid for our transgressions. But in the Spirit, we get a glimpse of just how much we love God and how much He loves us.

Good morning:

10 Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.  
12 The LORD will indeed give what is good,  
and our land will yield its harvest.  
13 Righteousness goes before him  
and prepares the way for his steps.  
-Psalm 85:10-13

Note:

I try to explain to other people just how poetic the Bible can be. I would say of any poet to ever walk the earth, David is my favorite. I just love the Psalms. I enjoy Davids' ups and downs. His life mirrors mine in many ways and probably yours. Enjoy today's verses and songs and next time you talk poetry with someone (probably something you haven't done since college) mention the Psalms.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (New International Version)

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Note:

Sometimes we all forget this simple explanation about grace - we do the things we do for the Trinity, not to boast about them, but because we are driven by the Spirit and God prepared each of us for specific tasks. The deeper you search your heart, the more you will understand what God has in store for you each day. Meditate on the big things and the small things as everything has spiritual implications. God's timing is best, so rely on His plan, not yours. Remember that if God is with you, no body else can be against you. You may have enemies, but God knows what to do. In your weakness, He has strength.

I sent this out tonight as I have a busy morning tomorrow.  
God speed,

Jeremiah 16:18-20 (New International Version)

18 I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols."

19 LORD, my strength and my fortress,  
my refuge in time of distress,  
to you the nations will come  
from the ends of the earth and say,  
"Our ancestors possessed nothing but false gods,  
worthless idols that did them no good.  
20 Do people make their own gods?  
Yes, but they are not gods!"

Note:

In a country where one of the most popular TV shows is called "American Idol", these previous verses take on a lot of meaning. Our country has more "idols" than I can list. Pop culture is a strange thing, but let me talk about

personal experience. For many years, music was my idol. I couldn't get enough of it. Not only was it a love, but I was trying to fill the hole in my heart that only Christ can fill. I probably had 2,000 cds at one point. Now I'm down to less than 100. This certainly is not meant as a boast, just an example of how our lives can get out of control and we can worship things other than God. This certainly doesn't mean you can't get excited about something. Just be careful what you place dear to your heart. The Lord should always come first.

Rejoice,

As God created the night and morning first and called that the new day, I am sending this out this evening. I hope this email finds you in good spirits and full of hope.

2 Corinthians 1:6 (King James Version)

6And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Note:

Paul, the author of much of the New Testament, had a thorn in his side throughout his ministry. Pain and suffering, if viewed from Biblical perspective, increases endurance. And endurance can lead to hope and patience. Just as an marathon runner works through much pain and discomfort during the training phase and the actual run, someone with other ailments works through difficulties as well. I think the two are linked at a very spiritual level. Endurance, whether physical or mental, can be attributed to patience with friends, family, and even those we don't care to be around. I think it is imperative as the scripture says above that comfort and affliction leads to God's molding of each of us. We are clay in His hands. We are a work in progress. Who are we to doubt what God thinks we need? Rest assured that He has each of our best interests at heart and that the Lord will see us through. Blessings,

Happy new day to everyone,

I don't usually venture into the interpretation of the Bible called "The Message" - today, it resounded with me

and I hope it will with you as well - it even brought a smile to my face - dare each of you to do the same, though my smile is easily accessible:

Colossians 3:1  
The Message (MSG)  
He Is Your Life

3 1-2 So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

Note:

You already see things from Christ's perspective. You are part of the vine. You are a branch of that very vine of Christ. So seeing things from His perspective is part of your very nature. It's not foreign to you. Call it what you will, but your love comes from God's love and Christ was and is love. What's so hard to understand about that. Blessings,

Good Afternoon,

Just a reminder - underneath each Bible verse, I add some personal commentary - just wanted to remind you.

Psalm 101:1-8 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

Note:

We live in such a feel good society that the real truth doesn't always come out. I know personally it's a lot easier to tell someone what they want to hear as opposed to what's real. But isn't this a form of lying. Are we being true to the Lord or ourselves when we do this kind of thing. Sometimes the truth hurts, and it's much better to tell it like it really is than deceive someone else. Yes, none of us is perfect. We all make mistakes. But my hope is that our friends, families, governments, news channels, preachers, etc. tell the truth. I was an Army officer for about 4 years - personal honor was one of the things my time in training and working taught me. God knows when you are exaggerating, bending the truth, or flat out lying. So why do it? And as the Psalms indicates above, don't hang out with people that are so full of themselves that they can't have the common decency to not lie. Blessings,

Good morning,

1 Corinthians 13:11-13  
New International Version (NIV)

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Note:

As we are fully known by the Lord, what do we want to reflect. Like the moon reflects the sun's powerful light, how do we come across to others? Are we trusted? Do we place other's before ourselves? Do we fill our heads with nonsense, only to reflect nonsense? I strive each and every day to reflect love. What greater cause in this life is there? We can spend our time on idle pursuits, or we can serve in a way that others have a better understanding of what the true light is. We should love God above all else.

When that occurs, what can we reflect but His love and His light? The sun shall pass and God Himself will become our sun. At that time, we will fully know His glory. Blessings,

The joy of a new day (the Lord created it so there is purpose in it),

My son's favorite book and movie is "Return of the King" by Tolkien:

"Tolkien and Lewis shared the belief that through myth and legend—for centuries the mode many cultures had used to communicate their deepest truths—a taste of the Christian gospel's "True Myth" could be smuggled past the barriers and biases of secularized readers."

Revelation 1  
New International Version (NIV)  
Prologue

1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Note:

Is the time really near? Has it been near for the last 2,000 years? God's timing is perfect when it comes to the end times. It is not up to man to try and mathematically or otherwise determine the date of the return of our Savior. There are cults that have picked the exact day year after year. Maybe they should have learned something by now. We don't know the time, nor the day of Christ's return. What we do know is that He will return. And in splendor and glory. In the meantime, we should be patient to the extent of suffering. God and Christ, in Heaven, are long suffering for us - we should learn a bit about how we should approach the end times by what the Trinity is currently doing. Grace and blessings,

Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship[b] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Note:

To fully understand blessings, you have to understand that blessings don't always work the way you want. You are a work in progress. Sure, clothing, food, shelter, family, and friends are among the many blessings the Lord bestows on His children. But what about those days that nothing seems to go right, do you not know that your Father in Heaven knows what's best for you. Without adversity, we would not understand joy. Without pain, we couldn't even begin to understand what Christ suffered on the cross. You don't need to "count your blessings" as God already has His plan for your life worked out.

I am blessed to have my kids this weekend and I probably won't be able to send out a message tomorrow, so here's this weekends devotion,

1 Corinthians 10:15-17 (New International Version)

15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.hat

Note:

In my last email, I said that pain helps you realize just a hint of what Christ went through in His last days on Earth. I did not mean to say that we have even the slightest bit of knowledge of the full extent of Christ's sufferings. The Bible tells us to "share" in His sufferings. I have heard many times, from many believers that we carry our own "cross". But we can only imagine the extent of Jesus's

pain. What's important is that we believe in Him and what He did for each of us.

Hebrews 11

Faith in Action

1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

If you have a chance, read the rest of Hebrews 11.

Note:

Confidence is something that only life's situations and the work of the Holy Spirit can instill in you. You are not born with it. Life's ups and downs increase your faith that the Lord will see you through each down turn. With confidence and faith, we learn to trust in our specific purpose in this life. Each of our purposes are unique. We need not want what someone else has. We should be content with what the Lord has entrusted to us. If we are responsible with the little He bestows on us, He will increase our territory based on that obedience. We should want this only to serve to a greater extent, not worrying about rewards or the such. We should not be motivated by money or possessions, but by our love of the Lord. I don't need to remind you that life is hard. Life can beat you down; man can disappoint you; friends and family can hurt your feelings; this world is a harsh place; but always remember that Jesus has "overcome the world (my signature line - John 16:33)". He will never let you down.

Good afternoon (no song this time - similar to what's on facebook, so if you have already read this, no need to read it again),

Just for interest, I went through the Bible for someone on the LovePrayObey distribution list - this person thought it would be interesting to see if I could find a verse and write a song with a length to match the verse - that's fairly impossible as I don't really know when I'm going to wind down a song, so I switched it the other way around -

record a song and then find a verse to match the song - I don't do this often - it's just kind of an interesting process - the true length of "Heaven is our home" is 4:33. As a note, there are very few books in the Bible that have a chapter 4 with 33 verses. But here's what I came up with (I included all the context).

#### The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4)

30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

From GotAnswers:

"So, the picture painted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed by Jesus is of the humble beginnings of the church experiencing an explosive rate of growth. It grows large and becomes a source of food, rest, and shelter, for both believers and false professing individuals that seek to consume or take advantage of its benefits while residing or mixing among what was produced by the seed. In other words, Jesus predicts that, while the church will grow extremely large from just a small start, it will not remain pure. While this is not a condemnation of the "bigness" of modern Christianity, it does show us the greatest burden that comes with it. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is both a prediction and a warning. May we listen to its message."

I happen to fully agree with this assessment.

You need to ask yourself that very question (considering all the vantage points you have), is the church still pure? (Socratic method - I am not going to be like certain preachers, politicians, etc. and either give my opinion or try to sway you one way or another)

With that in mind, it is not my opinion that matters, it is that of the Holy Trinity. You may feel differently. If so, let me know your thoughts and why you have them.

Without consideration of the general thoughts on this subject, we need to press on and serve diligently until the day of Christ's return comes.

I begged the question "is the current church pure?"

I had to elaborate on this from my point of view:

- None of us lives up to all the standards set forth by Christ.
- The church may be in a dark time, but hasn't there been other dark times?
- Is America really the only hope we have for keeping the church at it's purest?
- Do you really think any of us really knows God's plan (outside of the Bible, of course)? (a lot of people have been wrong already concerning what they thought they knew and only God knows)

I am not saying that we are not in the end times. I think we are. But a thousand of our days could equal one in Heaven. I don't care to think too much about tomorrow.

Romans 12:7-8 (New International Version)

7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Note:

In this past paced world in which we live in, it is often the people that need our help the most that are overlooked. We get comfortable in our own lifestyles, while so much of the world doesn't even have the basic necessities we take for granted. Encouragement is one of the key things we can give someone in need of help. Why did a well for a village when you can teach them the trade and supply them with the tools. I think the good Lord wants us to serve, but service sometimes means a little more work for us. Our greatest asset is time and how we use it is ultimately up to us. It is often said that what a person does when no one is looking really defines that person.

Isaiah 26:3-4 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength:

Note:

This track has no reverb, echo, or any other effect. It is the truest sound I can get of the Grady Jones mandolin on my home recording system. For me, it is as perfect as I could muster up this morning. The verses from Isaiah talk about another form of perfection - that of perfect peace. And that peace comes from the Holy Spirit residing in you. You might have aches and pains, you may lose your job, you may...But keeping your mind focused on the Lord can only lead to a sense of well being - an eternal well being. You didn't earn it and you don't come close to deserving it - His love for you and His perfect grace were given to you freely.

For your information:

I recorded a song yesterday, my personal favorite in the last few months for many reasons. It is called "Expression of Love". It was just a meditation on how much I love the Lord. If you would like a copy of it, email me and I will send it to you. I just am trying to send one email out a day to the LovePrayObey list. Let me know.

Today's Bible Verses:

Matthew 12:30-36 (New International Version)

30 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things

out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

See if I can get it right this time:

Psalm 119:124-126

New International Version (NIV)

124 Deal with your servant according to your love  
and teach me your decrees.

125 I am your servant; give me discernment  
that I may understand your statutes.

126 It is time for you to act, Lord;  
your law is being broken.

Note:

There is God's law, finished with Christ's sacrifice, the Law's of this nation, International Law, and the statutes put in place by Christ Himself. I personally think that most people, even Christians, don't take Christ's teachings seriously. Very few have abandoned their old ways to become new creations in Christ. They take the work on the cross for granted. They feel that, for example, taking the holy sacrament once a week and telling a priest all the deviant things they've done is all they really need to do. Open your Bible - and not just once a week at Church. Well, Christ said "It is finished" Himself. I personally think that we don't have to follow all or even any of Christ's teachings to secure our place in Heaven - He did the work for us. But if we take being a new creation seriously, and if we truly believe in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit, I personally believe, for myself, that a person would strive to follow His commands. That following Christ would be the most important part of our lives. That not to do so would be contrary to our new nature. Sure, we backslide and make mistakes, but that was yesterday. God made a new day, so we should live in it with vigor and involve Christ in each of our decisions, major or minor. Don't we want to be effective Believers that will increase the Kingdom and serve in a way that we benefit Christ. We were baptized with water and fire. Don't we still have that fire or have we lost it. Shouldn't we spend most of our time trying to further Christ's call as opposed to feeding our desires. That's where discernment comes in. Every

fabric of our life - our words, our decisions, even our thoughts - have spiritual implications. Food for thought.

Revelation 22:2-4  
King James Version (KJV)

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

Note:

How many of us truly want the Believer's in this world to have no more tears? How many of us are more concerned with the salvation of a friend or family member than truly worshiping the Lord? Christ entered this world of darkness over 2,000 years ago to reconcile God to His chosen people - Gentiles and Jews alike. Instead, in our times, the morning after pills use in on the rise. Parents are advocating abortions for their teenage daughters - crime is rampant throughout the world - the sex trade is on the rise - we didn't change a thing in the Middle East - if anything Israel is in more peril - Believers idolize sports, the TV, cruises, etc. Drugs are being legalized. Legal marriage between same sex couples is on the rise. Woman in combat roles in the military? Atheists having more of a say than Believers in a country founded by followers of Christ. The world economy is in shambles. Do I need to go on?

Yes, there are more and more people believing in Christ (But that's not ultimately up to us to decide), but church attendance is down. Mega churches preaching prosperity based gospel is on the rise (what happened to long suffering for the Kingdom). I personally have spent thousands more than I have received and am perfectly content letting the Lord provide what little I need (without going into personal finances - Is that a sign that I need to stop doing what I'm doing - not according to the

Holy Spirit and the Lord - at least in my prayers and correspondence with other Believers).

I believe the time is short - I believe, not know, that Christ will return in my lifetime. I don't know the time or the hour as some false prophets claim. Does the fact that Christ may return soon worry me? It excites me to no end. Does that worry you? If it does you really need to ask yourself why. Is it because you want your kids to grow up in a fallen world. Do you think this earth of darkness even begins to compare to the glory of Heaven. The time, in my opinion, was decided long before this world was created. God knows the past, present, and future and in His perfection all has been decided. Just read Revelation (I jest at the numerous people that have told me that John was on some kind of drugs when he wrote that book - and a lot of people don't take it seriously - even folks that say they are Believers). I look forward to the moment of His return and worshiping the Lord for eternity.

Verses from Mathew Chapter 27 (NIV):

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, [c] lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). [d]

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and [e] went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they

were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Note:

You can watch the Passion and get an idea of the pain Jesus endured for us. The reality of it really set in for me when I thought of my own son. I can't begin to imagine watching him go through what Christ did. And the Creator of the Universe, the God of everything, watched as His Son got to the point that He thought His Father had abandoned Him. I have had dreams of abandonment - more like nightmares. Where no one in this world, despite my good intentions and thoughtful prayer for many, cared in the least bit for me. Imagine Jesus, fully God and fully human, feeling like He had no one. Not His earthly mother or father, not His Father in Heaven, not His disciples - this is something to meditate on in these days leading up to Easter. Could you handle the loneliness that He must have felt. Can you even imagine the pain of taking on the sins of those who were to come to believe in Him. He entered this world in the humblest way and He left this world in total isolation and in a pain that no man has ever felt. Wow! It brings me to tears often. To think that He cared that much about us. That He would have done the same thing for just one of us. If that doesn't bring you to your knees, I don't know what will.

Just something about your vantage point - it is probably something you have thought about before, but maybe not from this perspective. And I'm not selling anything - just sharing my perspective. It's Christian in nature.

Most of you were probably born in the us. The majority of you had parents that loved you and supported you. Some of you have probably not had a really negative life altering experience in your life. You have lived in a country that believes in freedom of expression and speech.

Because we have those freedoms, there are a lot of different view points. These are formed from a lifetime of experiences. Some good and some bad. You have made good choices and probably some bad ones. You have probably hurt some folks and been hurt by some folks.

A lot of this is true for individuals throughout the world. Whether it's the middle east, asia, or europe, people share

a commonality. What is that commonality? We were created and made in the image of God. With that comes a lot of responsibility. It's our mission you might say to search for the true meaning in our lives. Not fill it with trips, cruises, disney world, things etc. to find meaning. Or put off thinking about deeper things. Not to say these things are evil, but they don't have anything to do with our true meaning. Our true meaning or calling if you will is to please God. That's what we are truly wired to do.

How do we please God? Jihadists think by destroying the west. Other's think by keeping a neat house. Still others think by following a set of rules. Some think by rallying around a flag or a nation.

When it comes right down to it, we can not please God without someone else in our lives. And who is that someone? Yes, Jesus Christ. He died for those who believe in Him and every knee will bow to Him when He returns.

Is a Christian life an easy one? No. We live in a fallen world and we all sin whether we know it or not. Sin displeases God and Christ and the Spirit and we are disciplined. God wants us to be more like Jesus. More Christ like if you will. One of the ways He does this is through discipline. He doesn't do this out of anger, but out of love. The same as when your child does something that he or she should not do.

Just remember that God loves you and Jesus will return, in God's time, to gather His Kingdom. It is not too late to search your soul, if you are not a believer, and ask God the questions you have. He will answer you. Maybe not in the time you want Him to, but He will answer. And the questions asked and how they are answered will lead to a loving and intimate relationship with Jesus.

The Bible and prayer are good places to start.

Deuteronomy 34:1 (NIV)

1 Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan...

Note:

We all have our own mountains to climb. Some literal, some life experiences, and some spiritual. They all play into molding us into who we are today. Sometimes the harder the climb, the easier the rest of life seems. Sometimes we climb to high and have to find a way down quickly. Sometimes we summit and get to see the lay of the land like Moses did in his last days on earth. No two paths are the same. The uniqueness of our situation and life's "climbing" is one of the Lord's joy - not in the pain we may suffer through some of our experiences, but in the mental, physical, and spiritual toughness that results. All I can say is never give up. Christ overcame the world to prepare your path. And He knows every step of it. So when life gets you down, get tougher, not meaner. That goes from everything from the way someone might be treating you to fighting off an ailment or disease. The war has been won, but that doesn't mean that you won't still have battles to face.

John 8:32 (New International Version)

32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Note:

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, this world has been full of lies. Satan is the Father of lies - Be true to yourself and to God Himself and don't lie. Don't bend or warp the truth to get ahead. Always, whether under oath, whether it hurts, whether it costs you your fortune (if you have one) - don't lie - kings did it, governments do it, families are filled with it - just don't give in to it. "...the truth will set you free." Of course, in this context they are talking more about following Jesus, but you get the point.

What do the two have in common? A lot, in my opinion. Imagine the imaginary mountain you are climbing in life - call it your walk as a believer or maturity or however you want to describe it. Each time you lie, you are taking a step down that mountain. You need to be honest with yourself - but you always need to be honest with God - don't "bare false witness" ever - to do so is contrary to the nature God wants you to have - just wanted to clarify the connection,

Romans 2:4-6 (The Message)

3-4 You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because he's such a nice God, he'd let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.

5-8 You're not getting by with anything. Every refusal and avoidance of God adds fuel to the fire. The day is coming when it's going to blaze hot and high, God's fiery and righteous judgment. Make no mistake: In the end you get what's coming to you—Real Life for those who work on God's side, but to those who insist on getting their own way and take the path of least resistance, Fire!

Note:

And not the fire you were baptized into. Life is full of surprises - good and bad. Each day's mission is laid before you. You have to be open to what God wants from you in a particular moment, minute, hour, etc. He doesn't work in our time, so be ready 24/7. God doesn't take a vacation. Should we? We are constantly wearing the armor of God, should we take this for granted. The armor and the Trinity's perfect power help meet the tough times - the resistance to our efforts on His behalf that only He can solve or pull us through. Yes, He wants us to trust in ourselves, but He also wants us to trust Him in everything. Taking the easy way out is can only lead to disaster. The Lord needs you as you are part of the Body - you are His eyes, ears, arms, legs, etc. The mountain reference is an easy one. When was the last time you climbed a steep pass on a mountain where you didn't meet with the resistance of the grade and gravity.

A very well known Bible verse especially after the book "Prayer of Jabez" came out.

Verse:

1 Chronicles 4:10 (New International Version)

10 Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be

with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

Note:

Will our life be free of pain as we climb the mountain God placed before us? I guess it depends on what kind of pain you are taking about. As we mature in our faith and walk closer with Christ, any pain we have can seem fleeting as we know that one day God will wipe the tears from our eyes and we will be in Heaven with our Creator. There will be no pain in Heaven. While we are on earth, we will experience trials and tribulation - that's clear throughout the Bible. I think it is more how we approach the idea of pain than anything else. As we age, there is more physical pain. Many children and adults experience tremendous pain when afflicted with cancer or other ailments. Others experience psychological pain. But most Believers that rely on God for everything, really don't concentrate on pain. The promise of being with their Savior is all they need to keep them pushing forward. Paul had a thorn in his side during His entire ministry. But he always called the body of Christ to press on. Keep climbing until the day that we are reunited in Heaven with our God.

Verse (from Psalm 38):

21 LORD, do not forsake me;  
do not be far from me, my God.  
22 Come quickly to help me,  
my Lord and my Savior.

Note:

Who do we turn to first and foremost for help? A friend or a family member? Or do should we look upward to our Lord and Savior? He knows our situation best; He knows our hearts best; He knows what we need and when we need it. I do believe the Lord uses other people in our lives to help and guide us in times of need - but we do need to be God reliant, not self reliant. So many of us think to look to the confines of this earth when in trouble before looking to the One who made us. So when we are climbing our mountain and face some kind of setback or trouble - turn to the Lord first! He has the righteous forces of the universe in His hands - He may solve the problem supernaturally or He may use something of this earth - but that's His

decision, not ours. The more we trust Him, the easier it is to rely on Him for help. King David sure understood this. By reading the Psalms or other parts of the Bible, we come to find out that most of His people, though not always consistently, looked to the Heavens before searching for their own answers. The more regularly we seek God's help first through the Holy Spirit, the better off we'll be. God's grace and blessings are endless.

Greeting this evening in which our Lord made (Some of you may have this track - it includes world instrumentation - but listen if you want to - I dedicated this track to my cousin, Sarah, for her wedding),

Verses:

Genesis 8:5-7 (New International Version)

5 The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

6 After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark 7 and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.

Note:

Windows bring in fresh air. Every atom down to to the protons and electrons were made and are sustained by the Lord Himself. We should relish in the environment He has established for us. Yes, we live in a fallen world, but Jesus Christ has overcome the world. Our Lord and Savior has already defeated the enemy. This was accomplished on the cross. If you except Him, we will relish in His peace and love. I don't know about you, but this is an invitation that shouldn't be turned down. Sure you'll have your trials and tribulations - that's the mountain you will climb - but eternity is at it's summit.

I don't have a harp to praise the Lord, but I figure the mandolin is a good substitute.

Psalm 43

3-4 Give me your lantern and compass,  
give me a map,

So I can find my way to the sacred mountain,  
to the place of your presence,  
To enter the place of worship,  
meet my exuberant God,  
Sing my thanks with a harp,  
magnificent God, my God.

Note:

While making our trek up the "sacred mountain", we should be sure to follow the compass and map the Lord gives us. Through His guidance, we will be able to walk the narrow path and not stray to far from His intentions for us. Who, throughout our life, do we really want to please? Isn't listening to our Lord's opinion something we should put at the top of the list. When we don't follow God's plan for us, trouble could be around the corner. Climbing the mountain God sets before us will have snares and traps set by the enemy. By following God's map for us, we will be able to avoid these most of the time. Those traps could be people or situations - stay alert, stay confident, and stay on course. It's the best road for each of us. At the end of it is a Heaven that we can't even dream of.

Daniel 2:44-45 (The Message)

44-45 "But throughout the history of these kingdoms, the God of heaven will be building a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will this kingdom ever fall under the domination of another. In the end it will crush the other kingdoms and finish them off and come through it all standing strong and eternal. It will be like the stone cut from the mountain by the invisible hand that crushed the iron, the bronze, the ceramic, the silver, and the gold.

"The great God has let the king know what will happen in the years to come. This is an accurate telling of the dream, and the interpretation is also accurate."

Note:

When climbing the mountain the good Lord sets before us, remember that our actions and words have great power. We are allowing God to use us to not only build His eternal Kingdom, but to help others along the way. The fact that He has entrusted us with so much is such a blessing. We each have our roles to play, but in essence we are working side

by side to carry out His will. Stand strong in all that He has given us. We are His body and through us He will accomplish what needs to be done in this world. Sometimes we just need to "Stand Strong" on our narrow path.

We don't always know when we are successful in carrying out the day's service. But that's not the point. God will always guide if we are willing to listen. Hopefully we learn from our mistakes. Standing strong in prayer, gratefulness, and awe of the Living God is sometimes all that is needed.

1 Peter 4:13-15 (New International Version)

13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

Note:

Being insulted can start at an early age. Folks that walk a different road, the narrow path, are bound to be bullied from an early age. Peter offers wisdom concerning this. It is not pride when we are shunned by speaking or spreading the gospel, but God knows our intentions and we will be rewarded. Living life like there is no Lord and Saviour is like walking blind in a mine field. Following Christ is not for the faint of heart. It can be a difficult path. But it is in this adversity that we are to become that which God intended. So don't fret when someone insults you or slanders your name for proclaiming the gospel - know that God is watching everything and everybody - He knows your heart and a special place is being prepared for you in eternity. I think back at my younger youth and how many children made fun of me. I spent a number of years trying to be popular. I drank beer and smoked cigarettes to fit in. God doesn't need for you to "fit in". He actually doesn't need us at all. We were made out of His love and it should be our life's mission to serve Him, despite the insults.

Good morning and welcome to the new day the Lord has made,

The phrase "narrow path" is really not used in a lot of translations of the Bible, but is used by many Christians. Here's a reference to Job talking about the Lord's path for him - we can all learn from the book of Job and what he went through and how he never lost sight of his love of the Lord:

Job 13:24-27 (Amplified Bible)

24Why do You hide Your face [as if offended] and alienate me as if I were Your enemy?

25Will You harass and frighten a [poor, helpless] leaf driven to and fro, and will You pursue the chaff of the dry stubble?

26For You write bitter things against me [in Your bill of indictment] and make me inherit and be accountable now for the iniquities of my youth.

27You put my feet also in the stocks and observe critically all my paths; You set a circle and limit around the soles of my feet [which I must not overstep].

Note:

If we had to be accountable for all the sins of our youth and the sins we commit every day, we would be in conscious prayer all the time. The Holy Spirit within us, given to us by the Grace of the Lord Himself, is in constant prayer for us and is our greatest asset in finding the right path in all situations. Some of us take this for granted. We want to be self evident and do things the way we think they should be done. Even Christians are hard headed sometimes. Don't we understand that we are not our own. That we have been bought with a price that none of us can completely understand. Jesus Himself died, was resurrected, and ascended for our sins. We are covered no matter what our decisions. But our decisions not only effect us, they effect those around us - our family, friends, and the world as a whole. We need to listen to the Lord and the Spirit within us, because without their counsel, we certainly could not navigate the mountain before us. Does the Lord "observe critically all (our) paths"? As we are in the second covenant and Jesus has sacrificed Himself for all our sins, we are not subject to the Law. But we need to understand that without the Holy Spirit we would be lost

and we still are asked, by the Lord Himself, to walk a "narrow path". With guidance, though we will stray as a black sheep would, we will continue down the road that God set out for us.

When thinking about a mountain, sometimes the word "steep" comes to mind and is the word that the Lord gave me this morning. In my searches, "The Message" uses the word several times as "steep yourself in God-reality" - here's the definition of steep:

adjective

1.

having an almost vertical slope or pitch, or a relatively high gradient, as a hill, an ascent, stairs, etc.

2.

(of a price or amount) unduly high; exorbitant: Those prices are too steep for me.

3.

extreme or incredible, as a statement or story.

4.

high or lofty.

I would think that either 3 or 4 would work for this phrase.

Verse:

Luke 12:29 (The Message)

"What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself.

Note:

Many people are always looking forward - planning for next week, next month, or for their retirement which is sometimes years away. God wants us to concentrate on the moment and on this day He has made. God will always provide for His children. Don't worry or fret. His plan is the best plan and it is indeed perfect. He knows whether you need to

be disciplined or whether you need something else. Why does He sometimes let bad things happen to us? That begs the question "does a loving father discipline his child?" I know this is obvious for the Believer, but sometimes we lose sight of the real reason we see our lives in turmoil sometimes. Love, and only love, is what our Father in Heaven is using. He wants to "give you the very Kingdom itself." We are an extremely important part of God's plan if we are willing to let Him take the wheel. Let Him drive our lives up the narrow path that is our mountain. This is the first day of the rest of eternity for each of us that believes in our Savior Jesus Christ and the holy Trinity. Without that anchor, life might seem fun and exciting, but are we truly serving the Kingdom? Christ is always interceding on our behalf, should we not spend diligent time worshipping Him? Shouldn't we look to the Heavens in awe? Something to think about - In His perfect hands,

One fellow believer on the LovePrayObey distribution had this comment and I agree with him:

" Still, it seems to me "steep" is used here like to steep a cup of tea."

I stand corrected and it's always good to get feedback. I'll be the first one to admit to a misinterpretation.

Matthew 7:21-26 (King James Version)

21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

Note:

God is love. If we act out of true love, then how can we go wrong. But the idea of what love is has been warped over the years. There are car commercials that say buying a certain car is love. We think that giving our kids nice gifts at Christmas is love. In my opinion, love is dropping our own self evident purpose and to replace it with a God centered purpose. To love God with all you are is not an easy task. It takes effort on our part to follow the precepts of Christ. The road less traveled comes to mind. But if we take the first step in that direction, we begin to form a relationship with the Trinity that is not built on sand, but on a rock that can't be torn down. Each step we take in putting Christ first - in the very center of our lives, our actions, our words, etc. - that rock becomes stronger and we can not be swayed by the temptations that this world sends our way.

Proverbs 2:9-15 (The Message)

9-15 So now you can pick out what's true and fair,  
find all the good trails!  
Lady Wisdom will be your close friend,  
and Brother Knowledge your pleasant companion.  
Good Sense will scout ahead for danger,  
Insight will keep an eye out for you.  
They'll keep you from making wrong turns,  
or following the bad directions  
Of those who are lost themselves  
and can't tell a trail from a tumbleweed,  
These losers who make a game of evil  
and throw parties to celebrate perversity,  
Traveling paths that go nowhere,  
wandering in a maze of detours and dead ends.

Note:

9/15 is my birthday, so I was excited when I found these verses with the reference to "trails". I always start with a word that the Lord gives me and then start searching from there.

I personally, being a former Army officer, know the value of trails. Some man made, some made by animals, and the most important one of all - the trail God sets before us. I remember, many years ago, hiking to the top of Yosemite's second highest peak. I was with two friends and having extensive training in navigation, I knew the best route - in this case it was following the stream that was winding through the trek to the base of the mountain. One of the friends that was on the trip with me said he was sure that we needed to go a certain direction. I knew he was wrong, but he was so certain that I decided to go along with him. So the three of us started climbing an almost vertical mountain with 40 pound or so backpacks on - dangerous to say the least. Of course he was wrong, we had to back track and we lost a couple hours of light and the other friend had really low blood sugar.

Why explain this story? Well, for a few reasons. First of all, there will be many people in your life that will try to sway you from the narrow path. They will entice you with everything from sex to wrong doctrine. Don't let them - there are many false prophets - don't listen to them. Read your Bible and the Holy Spirit within you will keep you on the right trail.

Secondly, if you do stray from the path the Lord has given you, you can get back on the right trail, but you will have wasted valuable time (one of our greatest assets) and energy (another asset we can't afford to give up lightly). The narrow road is the way to go and the Lord, if you let Him, will keep your path straight.

## 2 Thessalonians 1 (The Message)

5-10 All this trouble is a clear sign that God has decided to make you fit for the kingdom. You're suffering now, but justice is on the way. When the Master Jesus appears out of heaven in a blaze of fire with his strong angels, he'll even up the score by settling accounts with those who gave you such a bad time. His coming will be the break we've been waiting for. Those who refuse to know God and refuse to obey the Message will pay for what they've done. Eternal exile from the presence of the Master and his splendid power is their sentence. But on that very same day when he comes, he will be exalted by his followers and celebrated

by all who believe—and all because you believed what we told you.

Notes:

Praise God after this days sunset. Just a reflection on life. Just take one look at either of your hands and move your fingers - simple...but just doing this simple task reminds you that you are wonderfully made. I am in utter love and awe of God. Jesus came so we could live life more abundantly. Belief in Him and what He did for us brings me to tears often. I sometimes wonder what God was thinking as He saw His Son on the cross. This life is full of wonder. But it is also full of trials and tribulation. I wrote this song thinking about how, no matter how dismal life seems, we still have a loving God that is watching out for us...that loved us enough to see His Son tortured and killed. But we live in a time of redemption. The first Adam brought sin into this world through the deception of the enemy. Jesus Christ changed all that. He claimed He was fully God and fully human and there is nothing in my walk as a believer that would make me think otherwise. His blood changed the course of history forever. His resurrection from the dead gave us eternal life. I can't think of a better story than that. Can you? To have an infinite future with the God that essentially molded you out of clay and continues to have your best interests at heart. Someone that will never leave you or forsake you. Life throws the curve balls, the Trinity catches them and lets you hit the ball out of the ballpark. If I do send out another reflection, it will be tomorrow night (if the Lord makes it). In Christ's loving hands,

Matthew 11:28 (The Message)

28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Note:

When climbing the mountain set before you, you can't do it in one day. It takes a lifetime. There will be times where

you need to work really hard at something and other times you'll have joy breaks. You'll be able to rest from the tasks at hand. Don't worry about tomorrow. If the Lord has given you time to rest, then take it. Don't think you always have to be doing something. Don't worry about outward appearances. Actually, don't worry about anything. Instead, turn your energy to loving the Lord with all your heart and spreading the gospel to as many folks as possible. Christ didn't go through what He did so we could sit in front of the TV and watch the Jerry Springer show. Sure we need to stay informed, but always have that little voice in the back of your head saying what's next Lord (and certainly our restful times can be times of reflection). When He asks you to act, then act. When He gives you a breather, then take it. Remember that Paul was considered a clown to most folks (and he probably would be considered to be too radical today) and he authored most of the New Testament. We aren't here to impress others. We are here to further God's kingdom. And it's not on our terms, it's on His. Let the Holy Spirit lead the way. The Holy Trinity is not interested in your size, your intellect, or how much you can bench press - God's interest is in your heart - let Him have it and just see what miracles He can accomplish through you.

Psalm 56:12-13

The Message (MSG)

12-13 God, you did everything you promised,  
and I'm thanking you with all my heart.  
You pulled me from the brink of death,  
my feet from the cliff-edge of doom.  
Now I stroll at leisure with God  
in the sunlit fields of life.

Note:

I was agnostic for the first 24 years of my life. One day, at a rock-n-roll concert, I felt as though I was losing everything including my mind. I literally felt as though I was falling off a cliff. It was then that I found God. I reached out to Him and He pulled me out of the "cliff-edge of doom". Later that night, I realized it wasn't just God but Jesus Christ was right by His side. My mind, heart, and soul were full of love for the One who saved me from my own

private doom. I was baptized soon after and the rest is history.

I don't feel like I am walking in "the sunlit fields of life" everyday. I have my ups and downs, But there are times when spiritually I feel uplifted and I always feel Christ's presence. My whole being is at work a lot of the time through intercession and prayer. But when I'm down, all I have to do is concentrate on Christ and I know everything is going to be alright.

What is God telling the World?

On the one hand, Wall Street stocks are up - but I seem to remember a golden cow adorning the area.

On the other hand, "a swarm of locusts crossed into Israel from neighbouring Egypt Monday, raising fears that Israel could be hit with a biblical plague ahead of the Passover holiday." A Warning?

Joel 1:4-6 (The Message)

4What the chewing locust left,  
the gobbling locust ate;  
What the gobbling locust left,  
the munching locust ate;  
What the munching locust left,  
the chomping locust ate.

5-7Sober up, you drunks!  
Get in touch with reality—and weep!  
Your supply of booze is cut off.  
You're on the wagon, like it or not.  
My country's being invaded  
by an army invincible, past numbering,  
Teeth like those of a lion,  
fangs like those of a tiger.  
It has ruined my vineyards,  
stripped my orchards,  
And clear-cut the country.  
The landscape's a moonscape.

Note:

We live in turbulent times - whether it's the nuclear ambitions of Iran or the sex trade in Thailand, this world

is fallen and we have to realize that human effort can not completely restore it. Yes, we can infuse light into darkness. I see that as one of the primary role of a Christian. We can do this through prayer (intercession for others including countries and individuals), physical action, true worship, etc. We just need to leave our own realities sometimes on our life's climb, and realize that there is a world out there besides the US. That the problems we have been experiencing as a nation are small compared to many countries. In my opinion it is fine to have fun with family and friends, but we also have to maintain the servants heart placing others before ourselves. Trust in God to show you the way. He wants your agenda to match the things He needs for you to accomplish. Reflection and prayer frequently is a good way to get in touch with the Lord's desires for your life. We may feel that we know best - don't fall into that trap.

2 Corinthians 6:14 (The Message)

14-18 Don't become partners with those who reject God. How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark? Does Christ go strolling with the Devil? Do trust and mistrust hold hands? Who would think of setting up pagan idols in God's holy Temple? But that is exactly what we are, each of us a temple in whom God lives. God himself put it this way:

"I'll live in them, move into them;  
I'll be their God and they'll be my people.  
So leave the corruption and compromise;  
leave it for good," says God.  
"Don't link up with those who will pollute you.  
I want you all for myself.  
I'll be a Father to you;  
you'll be sons and daughters to me."  
The Word of the Master, God.

Note:

Leaders always talk about compromise when dealing with each other. Businesses compromise with each other to reach certain goals. Parents compromise with each other and their children in good times and bad. But never compromise your relationship with God. There is no room for that. You may

ask God's feelings about an action. You may seek Him in repentance. I for one would not trade my relationship with the Trinity for anything. God comes first. On my website, the first sentence is "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow". I want people to know exactly where my heart is and where I stand. Could I secularize my site and attract more activity and actually make some money on my music - yep, but in my heart nothing is more dear to me than the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Revelation 21:3-8 (The Message)

3-5 I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down—each word dependable and accurate."

6-8 Then he said, "It's happened. I'm A to Z. I'm the Beginning, I'm the Conclusion. From Water-of-Life Well I give freely to the thirsty. Conquerors inherit all this. I'll be God to them, they'll be sons and daughters to me. But for the rest—the feckless and faithless, degenerates and murderers, sex peddlers and sorcerers, idolaters and all liars—for them it's Lake Fire and Brimstone. Second death!"

Note:

This song is recorded in G major - a little echo and reverb added in. Like most of my songs, the Lord gives me an idea and I just run with it. I have been stuck with a lot of the same melodies in G for sometime. This particular meditation opened up some new ideas with respect to timing and note choice. I hope you enjoy it - there is one dissonant combination of two notes in the song - both notes are in the key, they just don't sound good together.

My daughter was so excited on Friday to show me her new shoes. Most folks like it when they get something that they have been hoping for. I know of people that don't get new things that often, and when they do, they might be second hand. New shoes wouldn't even be in their vocabulary. When Christ returns, everything will be made new. As the verses

talk about above, pain and suffering will be no more. No more tears. It's hard to imagine with so much pain in this world. But it is a promise the Lord has made and He, unlike some people in this world, always keeps His Word. So it's not a "Look busy, Christ is coming", it's a thank you Lord for this wonderful Revelation that keeps a lot of believers "pressing on" as Paul would put it.

Revelation 22:16 (King James Version)

16I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Note:

Place all your hope, dreams, and desires in Christ. He will see that your needs are met and that you live abundantly for eternity. He suffered greatly not only for your sins, but those of the world. All it takes is a leap of faith - though you can not see Him, He is always there. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost love so completely and perfectly that I find it difficult to understand the depth of that love. All we can strive to do is use Christ as an example of how we should love. First and foremost we need to love God with everything we are - that is the greatest commandment. I believe that when we do this, that the rest of our passion for love streams effortlessly from the Spirit within. Though we may not love perfectly, we should never give up on love. It is this humble attempt to love as best as we can that will see us through this life and life eternal.

I posted this on facebook and sent it to a few folks. I prayed about it as I was not going to do a devotional today. The Lord is directing me to send it to the entire distribution list.

"White" occurs throughout the Bible as a reference to purity. It is especially used in the Book of Revelation.

We, as a world, operate so much in the gray areas of life. We think our Lord and Saviour doesn't mind the day to day things we do that we know He probably doesn't approve of. Some of us have even done things that would be considered evil in His eyes, or black for this discussion.

I would maintain that, as Christ's chosen, that we strive to operate in the white as much as possible. That we pattern our lives after the Saviour that had a white dove from Heaven appear when John baptized Him.

I know that Christ's sacrifice covers our sins, but that's no reason to not be aware of them and to make every effort to repent. Think about the others that you can positively influence if you don't give into temptation. Our actions and the way we live speak louder than words. You can get into as close a relationship with Christ as you want.

I urge you not to conform to this world's gray and black areas and to stand for the "white" that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit stand for.