

EXPLANATORY NOTES WILL FOLLOW AFTER CHAPTER...

Chapter 3
The Powers That Be...

Romans 13:1

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Again, in consideration of Romans Chapter 13, verse 1, we should understand that if something has power over us – a dictating power that we cannot control, and is pulling us in one direction or another – then chances are very high that God Himself had ordained that power over our lives . . . Nay, but that God *did* ordain that power over our life! I am speaking to those who feel that they are trying to follow God*. When something has power over you, and it causes you to travel down a path that you wouldn't have gone if you were in complete control yourself, then this has to be a sign of God intervening. The thing that had been given power over you may not even be a good source; but, in God's world, that really doesn't matter*. Let's consider the power over Jesus (*a source that was not good*) that led to His death on the cross:

John 19:10

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that **I have POWER to crucify thee, and have POWER to release thee?**

Here, we have a good example of an ungodly man having power over a Godly man. In this case, Pilate was reminding Jesus that it was in his power to either grant His life, or he could take it . . . On the other hand, Jesus then reminded Pilate who had ordained that power to begin with, and who had given it to him in the first place:

John 19:11a

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above.

Once again, how much does God intervene and interfere with our lives? If we can conclude, *according to Scripture*, that it's over *every* aspect, then why do we even consider any other course than that which God has laid out for us? Honestly, can there really be another way? A way, that is, that can be good? Jesus, as many have found out, is the *only* way...

John 14:6a

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life*...

As we will continue to learn through the course of this book, and as I hope to prove through the Lord's Written Word along the way, that God is, and should be, over EVERY aspect of our lives . . . I've heard it said, by good Godly folks, though, that God doesn't really care where we live, or even where we work, etc. We just simply pick and choose according to our own tastes and comforts. *But, can that really be the case?* Who knows

who we'll meet in a neighborhood, or at a job, who can be witnessed to, and who could be changed by even quoting a single scripture. *Shouldn't we always be about God's business?** I mean, what are we even on this earth for if it's not to live every moment for Him? If it's not to serve Him continuously?* Are we here for a vacation? To benefit in earthly goods? To partake of earthen pleasures? Or, is it to constantly be in God's will and service?

But, on the other hand, we neither should believe that God expects us to view this life as nothing more than one big fiery trial after another; or, that this life is all work and no play! The difference, though (as opposed to *worldly* activities of fun), is that our *enjoyment* shouldn't be in foolish merriment or fleshly mirth*; nor is it in practicing Godly duties with slight regard or disrespect. But, it truly is in finding pleasure in the *joy of the Lord*, which is our strength.* Yes, my friends, we can actually find pleasure, fun, and joy in the very act of simply serving our God – *in all of its varied forms*. In fact, as one would discover, if they'd but take up the challenge of doing so, they'll find more joy in His service than they could in *any* other endeavor of earthly fun, or even worldly riches. *Am I mad for thinking so?* Even though I had pointed out on the back of this book, in the quoting of Paul, that it can be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God* (which is in judgment, chastisement, heavy correction, or just simply in intense training), that it's certainly not the *only* thing that we should expect from this loving and supreme Being . . . Please note that I'm laying heavy on the side of our Lord which has its place in the trials and tribulations that we go through in this life because that happens to be the theme of this book; but, on a brighter side, I will certainly end this telling, in the last chapter, by mellowing the tone, and in describing God's boundless and endless love – which is triumphantly unmatched by any other creature, state, or industry . . . So, therefore (and, again), God does *not* wish for us to look at our lives as just one big trial after another; but, and more to the point of logic, God expects us to view this life as one Godly *opportunity* after another. *And, in the midst of it all, He's actually challenging us to draw near to Him with our hearts, in love and peace, so that He can prove that He'll draw near to us.** This life, my friends, is one big Godly classroom, to where we are ever learning, updating our Godly knowledge, and trying to conform to His perfect will . . . But, too, it's in finding that perfect peace in our hearts that passes all understanding.*

Now, let's see God's requirements for His children:

Deuteronomy 10:12

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear [respect] the LORD thy God, to **walk in ALL his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.**

Joshua 22:5

But take **diligent heed** to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to **walk in ALL his ways**, and to keep his commandments, and to **cleave unto him**, and to **serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.**

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

John 12:26 (Jesus speaking)

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

Romans 12:11-12

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.

Now, let's consider whom those rulers and ministers are that Paul speaks on having power over us:

Romans 13:3-4

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he [that ruler] is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Now, I've heard a lot of explanations as to whom these rulers/ministers are, and prior to my personal experience in A.D. 1996, I even had my own thoughts concerning them; but, I'd like to offer another explanation . . . Let's see whom these persons are according to other English translations of the Bible:

RULERS (as translated in the King James Version):

New Living Translation – *Authorities*
Aramaic Bible in Plain English – *Judges*
Jubilee Bible 2000 – *Magistrates*
Douay-Rheims Bible – *Princes*

MINISTER (as translated in the King James Version):

New International Version – *Authority*
English Standard Version – *God's servant*
Holman Christian Standard Bible – *Government*

But what does **Strong's* Greek Dictionary** say of these?

Rulers – *archōn*, Strong's Greek Dictionary, G758

Present participle of G757; a first (in rank or power): - chief (ruler), magistrate, prince, ruler . . . G757 (archō): A primary verb; to be first (in political rank or power): - reign (rule) over.

Minister – *diakonos*, Strong's Greek Dictionary, G1249
An attendant, that is, (generally) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specifically a Christian teacher and pastor (technically a deacon or deaconess): - deacon, minister, servant.

Now, what can be confusing about this is the fact that a Ruler and a Minister, at first glance, are two completely separate things. Consider, a ruler, according to Strong's, is an authoritative figure; and a minister, also according to Strong's, is an attendant, one who serves rather than rules. And yet Paul, in the Romans reference, calls them one and the same person(s). See, again, the quoted scriptures above for **Romans 13:3-4**. But, we know that a minister (such as a pastor, prophet, or teacher, etc.) can *both* be authoritative and a servant at the same time – so, is that whom Paul was speaking about? Or, instead of dealing primarily with the church world, should we focus our thoughts, as *Holman Christian Standard Bible* seems to, onto the Governments? But, in their reference, did they mean Governments of the ungodly world? Or, Governments in Christianity? For, surely, there are Governments in both.

Now, before we allow these rabbit trails to fill volumes and volumes of books, with their pros and cons of arguments, let's consider the *root* of the entire issue, rather than the mere branches. What do I mean? I say, and according to the theme of the Bible, that *anything* that has a power over you (which is life-changing in either the direction your life turns, or the direction that your thoughts turn) will be *both* authoritative and a servant to you – whether it be an actual person, or a strong life situation; whether it be the Governments of this world, or a Government figure in the church world; whether it be a tremendous, destructive storm; a financial crisis; a horrible illness or disease; or even folks who turn their backs on you; *etc.* – it really doesn't matter *what* or *whom*, for as long as the job gets done, and you learn of God's statutes through these trials and tribulations, then the source is of little consequence, because it is what had helped you to become a better person, and God has been glorified through your course . . . You see? . . . This is better than pinpointing a single source; for, with this broader view, we see the form of the *Ruler* in Pontius Pilate, with his power to give or to take the life of Jesus; we see this *Minister* in the form of the whale that swallowed Jonah whole, for which cause we see him yield to the higher power of God, to which the whale was ordained, in that Jonah's mind was changed, and off to Nineveh he preached; we see the *Ruler* in Pharaoh, of whom God had hardened the heart of, to where he would not let the children of Israel depart from Egypt – all to show the power of God to the nations of the world; and we even see the *Minister* in all the ungodly nations that were brought against Israel in war – breaking them, and taking them into captivity, time and time again. All these *served* God's purpose, and were *authoritative* toward the objects of reform...

Through all these, I say, *and more besides*, lives were bettered, and enhanced; thoughts were changed, and lifestyles enriched. The powers that be, which were ordained by God – *servitude/authoritative life-changing powers* – were in full swing, doing their job...

Explanatory Notes begin on the next page...

EXPLANATORY NOTES for Chapter 3:
The Powers That Be...

****I am speaking to those who feel that they are trying to follow God...***

The Scriptures, along with their benefits and training, were *only* written for the children of God. As I had already explained in my first book, *Brotherly Love: The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, that technically all humans throughout all time are the children of God, but when I make this reference to them in my writings, I am only speaking about the *elect* of Christ – those whom God will transform into the image of His son Jesus Christ. Not every human who has ever lived upon this planet fits that description. Therefore, and with that being said, please know that when the scriptures do speak about God intervening in our lives, and even influencing us to turn our steps here, or to turn our steps there, it is *primarily* for the children of God to be governed thus. The ungodly (even though many times they're called to do some similar things – for reasons that I'm fixing to explain – and, indeed, did touch upon in my very first *End Note* for Chapter 2) are more apt to act *randomly* in their daily business. However, that is certainly *not* the end of the story for them! Even though I believe that they were, since the beginning of time, ordained to work from their own circuits onto their randomness of life activities in general, their dealings with the *chosen elect* of God (whether those dealings be good or bad) are certainly governed by divine Providence. There's no doubt in my mind, and according to what I have studied and meditated upon in scripture, that this is certainly the case . . . But, one may curiously ask, that if the ungodly (that is, those of whom do not, and never will, follow the *pure* will of God unto holiness and life eternal) aren't meant to make it to be with Him in His eternal kingdom, then why are they even here on this planet to begin with? That is, if we believe that *everything* in this life revolves around God. The only logical answer that could come from such a question is that they were put here for the *elect's* sake; that is, in assisting God in both good deeds, and also (and more especially, according to the theme of this book) in their participation of (and of them causing) the trials and tribulations that the *elect* experience, which help mold and shape the children of God into mature vessels. Hence, by us resisting the evil of mankind (which God sometimes throws directly against us in these said trials and tribulations), we become, in our triumphs, *overcomers* – in overcoming evil with good [**Romans 12:21**]. And if we are overcomers, then we, as the *elect of Christ*, can have a place with God in His invisible kingdom . . . Such a thought as this will help us to understand how and why God uses evil against us in this whole process, because – and it must be understood – that *nothing* can be more evil than the heart, the intent, and the actions of evil man, as I will certainly cover with more detail in part 2 of *The Evil Side of Creation*; and, too, as is illustrated in the first chapter of the letter to the Romans by the Apostle Paul . . . However, and as I also had pointed out in my first book, that just because an individual is *ungodly*, it does not determine that they are evil. Most ungodly folks are not so, but are just simply not of God's world or kingdom; they're just *ungodly* – in the sense, that is, that they don't follow Him, or His Holy Law, unto holiness, and were never supposed to . . . Of course (and this saying is true), that a lot of *elect* live as the ungodly, in that they don't know they're destined to do otherwise, and will do the same daily things as the non-elect; and some, even, will go a long time without knowing God, or living in His kingdom; but will, ultimately, move out of their fleshly situations – even if it's slowly. And, for this reason (surely, it is *God's* reason), we – who think out things, a lot of times, with our fleshly mind – can *never* guess who is not an elect. Hence,

we are forbidden to judge *unrighteous* judgments against individuals [John 7:24] . . . Not only so (and this may blow the mind of a few), but there are even some ungodly individuals (that is, of whom will never have eternal life with God) who were placed within the walls of churches, and who were placed therein by God Himself for the sole purpose of both helping and challenging His *elect* children; because, whenever the children of God are gathered together, satan is in their midst:

Job 1:6

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

Job 2:1

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

Of course, and again, we will get into more about that in part 2 of this series, and of why satan was not only there in the book of Job, and of what he was doing while there, but we will also be able to see how satan can come into the midst of any given gathering of the children of God in our own modern times.

****In God's world, that really doesn't matter...***

In phrasing this in such a way, I'm really not trying to be careless in my theological approach. Neither am I trying to be *cavalier* about what I've said. But, I'm simply meaning that the source of which God will use to further a situation along can either be good or evil; therefore, in God's world, it doesn't matter which He chooses to use, for (as I hope to convey), He always has *good* reasons for the choices that He makes, of how He operates, and of why He does these type of things the way that He does. This will be further explained during the course of this book. Other than this, read further in the main text, where you left off to read this *End Note*, to see how God used Pontius Pilate, *an ungodly instrument* [an instrument, that is, who certainly beat and killed folks for the glory of Rome], to further His plan along.

****Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life...***

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

There are actually a lot of folks who do not know that Jesus is the *only* name by which mankind can be saved from the grave, and who is the only path to eternal life. The scriptures do *not* say otherwise, and neither can it be proved by them that there is any other door to obtain such access. Therefore, there is no other religion by which man can come into the Father's abode than that of Christianity. *Not Hindu; not Muslim; nor any other.* Even if you believe there is another way in, what I'm saying is that it *cannot* be found in the Christian Bible – *for whatever that's worth to any certain individual.*

Acts 4:10-12

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

***Shouldn't we always be about God's business? ...**

Luke 2:49

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary

About my Father's business — literally, "in" or "at My Fathers," that is, either "about My Father's affairs," or "in My Father's courts" - where He dwells and is to be found - about His hand, so to speak.

Even though a lot of commentators point out that the translation here should have been "about my Father's HOUSE," as opposed to "business," the meaning is still clear, in that He was where He needed to be – and that place was in God's presence and service. And, if we are to imitate and follow Christ's examples in our daily walk, then we, too, should be about the Father's affairs, in His house [not a literal building in this example, but, metaphorically, in His presence], and doing things, on a daily basis, that pleases Him.

1 Peter 2:21

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, **that ye should follow his steps.**

1 John 2:6

He that saith he abideth in him [Jesus] ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

***What are we even on this earth for if it's not to live every moment for Him? If it's not to serve Him continuously? ...**

2 Corinthians 10:5

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity **EVERY THOUGHT** to the obedience of Christ.

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible

All the plans of life should be controlled by the will of Christ, and formed and executed under his control - as captives are led by a conqueror. All the emotions and feelings of the heart should be controlled by him, and led by him as a captive is led by a victor.

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes

Destroying all vain reasonings, and every high thing which exalteth itself - As a wall or rampart - against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought - or, rather, faculty of the mind - into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Those evil reasonings are destroyed. The mind itself, being overcome and taken captive, lays down all authority of its own, and entirely gives itself up to perform, for the time to come, to Christ its conqueror the obedience of faith.

Psalms 10:4

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after* God: **GOD IS NOT IN ALL HIS THOUGHTS.**

This last verse may get a bit confusing to some. Is it insinuating that a good, Godly person will only have God on their mind 24/7? And, is this similar to what Paul said concerning prayer?

Continued on the next page...

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

Now, without the risk of sounding silly (for I take every scripture in God's Word *very* seriously), we should know that we just aren't going to *literally* do that! *Why?* Well, we aren't going to pray while we are sleeping, right? So, how can we fulfill that scripture? We fulfill it by making prayer a constant part of our daily lives, as much as we can do, *without ever stopping (without ceasing)*, until the end of our course. God knows that there is daily business that we must attend to, and is very understanding over such matters. So, the idea is to just do so as often as we can, and to actually make a habit of it. Much in the same line of thought about having God on our minds, *without ceasing*. God certainly should be the biggest part of our every day lives – *and not just on Sunday, either!* In fact, what really defines us as Christians is how we conduct ourselves during the time that we *aren't* in church. Who we are says a lot to other folks, and we need to become *living epistles* (i.e. living *books* or *letters*) so that we can be *read* by those around us on a daily basis . . . The sense of both scriptures that I gave for this example is to say that God should be a part of our every day lives, *instant* in prayer, *instant* in our thoughts about Him. We can take Him with us to work, on fishing trips, to the mall – *and we should*. But, in the case of the ungodly, the thought and reverence of God isn't in their thoughts as a *mainstay*; or, not at all. And, neither is their *conscience* captive to the Spirit of God, as ours should be. It's not a bad thing that God is a jealous God [see **Exodus 20:5**, for instance], or that He wishes for our *business* (or, *affairs*) to be about Him all the time. In fact, that's a very good thing! *Can you imagine being important to a powerful God?* Let's face it folks, when He called us, He didn't just say "*Hey, you!*," He called us by name (or, that is, it was a personal experience); and, just like us, He desires love and attention. He doesn't get mad when we love other people, or when we spend time with friends and loved ones; but, it can be hurtful when we go an entire day and not even give Him a single thought; for, truly, He can read our minds and know! [See **1 Corinthians 3:20**; **Psalms 94:11**; and **Isaiah 66:18** for example]. And, He even keeps up with our conversations, too. We shouldn't deny Him of what is His – and that's *all* the attention that He desires and deserves. We should count ourselves blessed to have been paid attention to by someone so mighty and powerful – especially when we are nothing more than bits of dust! And, yet, He loves us with an everlasting love.

****Our works shouldn't be in foolish merriment or fleshly mirth...***

Now, here, I'm not going to be hypocritical in passing judgment on folks who do simple worldly things [*other than* that which is considered evil or filthy], such as watching mild television, or in going to the movie theatre to watch family quality entertainment, listening to secular music, etc., for I do some similar things myself. *But, even so, this is not an excuse for any of us!* What do I mean by that last statement? It's an easy thing to make slight of such worldly activities – and, I'm calling such 'innocent' things *worldly*, for they are certainly not Godly, even if such vehicles can sometimes be used to spread the Gospel; the initial intention of the instruments themselves, however, were not begun with such thoughts. In fact, there used to be (once upon a time) ministers who would preach heavy against TV, theatre, bowling, sports in general, and even drinking coffee! By today's standards, though, such messages would appear ridiculous to most people, who would deem such worldly activities as extremely mild, and harmless in the eyes of God. *But, then again, the average person is not familiar with even three fourths of their Bible,*

either! And with such a thought as this last statement, they would be hard pressed to prove, by scripture, that God doesn't mind such worldly activities to languish in their every day lives. They might actually discover, though, upon close examination, that the *opposite* is true to what they had thought all along . . . *impossible?* . . . But, back to the preachers of old, who convinced a lot of people that doing such 'innocent' worldly activities was not walking a pure walk with God, and had actually replaced a lot of the people's normal schedule with Godly duties instead – and the astounding result was a closer and more spiritual walk with the Lord [see, for example, "*In His Steps*," by Charles M. Sheldon] . . . *Not bad, eh?* . . . It's not a secret that church services were much richer than what they are today, between about when this Country first begun until the 1950's A.D., and that people were able to pull upon the Spirit of God a lot easier then, also. But, by replacing continual, Godly praise and worship with worldly activities instead, we have sacrificed a better life with God, and have watered down our relationship with Him. Again, *is that impossible?* If God, as we have learned about in an *End Note* earlier, really wants our attention every moment, and that He's a jealous God, then do we really think it impossible for Him to dislike anything worldly that we do? Let's face it, folks, it's better to at least *realize* our shortcomings (to be conscience of them), than to be so dogmatic about doing them, that we turn a blind eye to the fact that, ultimately, God really *does* care about what we do with our (what we call) spare time. Realization to His wishes, though, is a battle half won . . . Friends, we must know, in my example here, that there are two different kinds of worlds out there – *a total Godly world, and a total fleshly world* – and that they are two completely opposite things, and are actually opposed to one another. Anything in the middle (*even if it's very mild*) is truly lukewarm; and the Bible does *not* recognize *any* gray areas. The Bible, instead, sees things in either black or white; in either hot or cold. There's nothing lukewarm; there's no gray; there's no middle ground. And I, myself, realize that I have a *long* way to go before I can become whom I need to be for God, and that there is so much more that I can do to become a better person. Fortunately, for my own sake, I can see and understand my own shortcomings – *even if I cannot overcome them immediately*. There's *always* room for improvement for all of us, and we should never think otherwise. But, like I said (and not to discourage some), we need to at least be *aware* of what needs to be changed and weeded out, and certainly not to be *proud* of the worldly things that we do. But, this is all a part of our walk with God: we need to at least be able to see, by looking into our past, what or where we have made some improvements on, and be joyful about our triumphs for God . . . All that being said, what we need to focus on, instead of worldly things, is in finding joy and strength in the continual service of serving God – even if it takes the rest of our lives to accomplish that goal; even if it takes us the rest of our lives to overcome the flesh and its desires; even if it takes us the rest of our lives to be an ultimate overcomer! . . . Now, I am going to contradict (or, at least seem to contradict) everything that I have just said, for there *is* a gray area in God's service. But, of course, this is going to take a bit of explaining. And, since I can't speak for anybody else, I'm going to speak from my own experiences; and reveal, in this short process, a little more about myself that a lot of people probably don't know. Years ago, I developed a love for the story *The Three Musketeers*. I was eight years old, and it was when I had watched a movie of the same name, late at night, on television. It was an old cinema classic, from 1948, and had starred Gene Kelly in the leading role. As crazy as it may sound to anybody, that movie had actually changed my life! Not only so, but I am convinced to this day that God was the one who had ordained it so. In fact, I'll go as far to

say that if I didn't watch that movie that night, or if it didn't influence me at all, then I wouldn't be writing this book today . . . *insane*? Not at all, if we can but understand how God works with what we would consider *secular*, and how He can use such things for the benefit of His kingdom. Much in the same way, of sorts, as He would use a worldly, ungodly person (with how they send us through trials and tribulations – as I had explained in an *End Note* earlier) to help us to become better people for Him – but, of course, in a different manner, though. Folks, we are living in this world, and even though we aren't supposed to be *of* it (that is, in wallowing in filthy pleasures), it surely doesn't change the fact that we are going to have to interact with it! And, being just a pilgrim passing through, it doesn't mean that we won't be stopping by places, saying hello, and interacting with the natives. We aren't an island to ourselves, and living separately to escape interaction with the ungodly (who presently are ungodly, but can prove out later – some of them, anyways – to be the *elect* of Christ) isn't good either, for to whom will we witness if we do so? *The turtles? The rabbits?* The animals don't need the Gospel, but people do! Therefore, if we are to interact with them, we are going to have to speak a language that they can understand – and we get that similar language by experiencing things in life ourselves. This is why some of the most successful Christians (though I am not speaking of all) are those who have had a very rough, rocky, and secular life up until their conversion; for they can now speak on a level to people who are burdened with similar things, and with authority, too! And, who is to say that it wasn't God Himself who set that very course for them from their beginning in life? Especially when it created a ministry for them down the road . . . So, when I say that there are no gray areas in serving God (and that saying still holds true), it's in *future* goals (of where we *should* be heading), and it's not necessarily in the journey to get there. It's where, as I've said, God is trying to lead us (*to hot; to white*); it's when we finally grow up and put away childish toys, and become adults . . . Now, back to *The Three Musketeers*. My interest therein led me to have a desire to read, a desire to study history, and finally a desire to write. By the time I was sixteen years old, I had written the first rough draft to my first upcoming novel on historical fiction; which, of course, was about a *Musketeer*. This novel, when finally completed, was published in book form in A.D. 2009; followed, in A.D. 2012, by a second novel on historical fiction; which, too, had been composed from a rough draft back when I was sixteen years of age, back in A.D. 1987. This experience (from which if I did not have, would never have come to be) led me to publish my first book on Christian Theology in early A.D. 2016. Of course, since I first developed a love for writing because of these said historical novels, it led me to not only write my first rough drafts of my own books, on historical fiction, but it also led to me writing my very first piece on Christian Theology as far back as A.D. 1999 . . . I know, *beyond a doubt*, that the study of history is of extreme importance to Christianity, and I highly encourage my readers to take a special interest in it, for being educated in such a way is entirely beneficial for our walk with God (of *any* historical time-period), for we can see where we have come from, and also know what mistakes to avoid in our own future; but, not only so, God's book is also a history book – *which is the most important reason of all!* As far as historical *fiction* stories are concerned, though, I know that I have a weakness there; and I feel almost like St. Jerome [compiler of the *Latin Vulgate*, in A.D. 405] in the comparison of how he loved his histories and stories by some Roman authors, who weren't Godly men. In fact, according to '*Reader's Digest: The Bible Through the Ages*,' on page 220, St. Jerome had tried, "*as he might, he could give up neither his cherished library nor his great love of classical*

literature. 'However much I did penance,' Jerome wrote, 'I always ended up creeping back to Cicero or Plautus.'" He, therefore, felt that he was distancing himself from God by reading these. I laughed out loud the first time I read that about his concern, for I felt that it was merely a slight weight in his life, one that he shouldn't have even troubled himself about; but then I realized how I shared a similar burden to him with my Musketeer stories. And, admittedly, *I still like them*. And, even though they aren't raunchy in nature, neither filthy, but are decked with adventurous history, this takes a full swing back around to what I was first saying about these mild secular things, and how that they can keep us from thinking about God at every moment . . . But, I'm not trying to cast a stumbling block in front of myself or my readers, for I know that such things cannot keep us out of the kingdom of God. What they do, though, is that they can stop us from living up to our *full* potential for Him while we are still here on this earth. If these small things are a sin, it's only to ourselves, in that they can be a weight to weigh us down – a weight, that is, from keeping us from climbing as high as we possibly can. But, if we aren't careful, and we end up spending more time on our, *seemingly*, innocent activities, they truly *can* become an idol to us, and can turn our fun into a serious sin! And, we don't want that, do we? Isn't our goal to be as close to God as possible? And, isn't our goal to please Him every opportunity that we can? . . . But, I spare you! I say to let God be your conscience in such matters – i.e. let God guide your conscience through the Holy Ghost. And, even though it's a common saying, I strongly believe in *WWJD: What Would Jesus Do* if He were in our place, doing these things? Would He even have done them at all? Therefore, whether it's in sports, music, movies, the arts, or whatever you feel that God has led you down the corridor of, then embrace it for all its worth for the time being, especially if it's giving you a useful skill for God's work in the future; but we also need to know (*and I am speaking to myself, also!*) of when to let things go; or, to even loose ourselves from other ungodly activities that we know that God did not ordain us to do (*especially, if we are beginning to feel conviction over them!*)! But, again, even if you feel that God did have you use a worldly vehicle to express His love to others, then please consider an example that my mother had shared with me, that years ago God gave her the first job she ever had – she was *convinced* that God gave it to her. But then, being as young as she was, she thought that since God gave it, that she should never leave it, else it would be an insult to her God. It took an older, wiser person to tell her that just because God gave it to her in the first place, that it didn't mean it was for forever. Friends, when God moves, we need to learn to move with Him (that is, when He moves us away from earthen things), for the journey out of them will only lead us to become better people for Him. To reach the ultimate goal of becoming Christ-like is in moving away from *all* things secular, carnal, fleshly, or worldly; for, in all actuality, and ultimately, *anything* that isn't of God is really a big waste of our personal time! Let's be aware of the moving of the Spirit, and try to flow with that sweet river of life as it moves us away from our fleshly crutches. He only has our best interest at heart, He loves us beyond reason, and His understanding is infinite. *Praise be to His worthy name, Amen!* . . . Also, too, and in consideration to all of what I have just said, I do believe in the *permissive* will of God, as opposed to the *perfect* will of God, in that He can and does allow us to indulge in things that aren't particularly Godly, but, of which things, won't terminate our walk with Him, even though they slow us down in our race. He completely and totally understands the workings of our flesh, and is very kind, lenient, forbearing, and longsuffering with us in many areas of our lives. But, and just because He *allows* certain things to be, it does not, and should not, dictate our thoughts

to believe (even for an instant), that this is where He wishes for us to wallow for the rest of our lives. Like I said, there is a time when we must grow up. But (*and this may shock a few*), this tolerance to our childish ways isn't just in worldly and fleshly matters, but we also can bring a lot of *religious* baggage (from man's religion, that is) into God's church world. And, in God's *spiritual* kingdom, we can act carnally, and perform His *spiritually understood* rituals with and in our flesh!...

Galatians 3:3

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

****The joy of the Lord, which is our strength...***

Nehemiah 8:10

Then he [Nehemiah] said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is holy* unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for **the joy of the LORD is your strength**.

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice evermore.

Psalms 118:24

This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 16:11

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Psalms 119:14

I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches.

****It can be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God...***

Hebrews 10:31

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Of course, for an average ungodly person (one who will prove, at the end of their journey, that they weren't an elect, and will simply drift away), it's in the fact that they will go their whole life and never get to know the Lord. For an *evil* ungodly person (especially one who harms others for pleasure), their fate could be . . . well, let's just say that I wouldn't want to be in their shoes! But, for the elect, it's in judgment, chastisement, heavy correction, or intense training. With these last statements, know that we don't necessarily have to have done something *wrong* in order to be tried with fire – as if we are being punished; but, we being of flesh, will always have something that needs burned out of us – even if it's something as simple as un-forgiveness, grudges, malice, or any other bad traits that we pick up as bad habits. From day one, God is shaping and molding us on that potter's wheel, in perfecting us (training us to become mature adults). Please note, that chastisement isn't *punishment* for what we are doing wrong (for, we were born with a fleshly nature on purpose from God, so He's not surprised when we do bad things), but chastisement is *correction* for what we aren't doing right. Since we were born, like I said, with a fleshly nature already, then we have to learn obedience to God by the things He

puts us through, which makes us suffer in the flesh. But, contrary to popular belief, it's a *wonderful* thing to be chastised by God, for it proves to us that He loves us, and that we are his children, else we will be of the world, and destined for the grave.

Hebrews 12:6-8

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

****He's actually challenging us to draw near to Him with our hearts, in love and peace, so that He can prove that He'll draw near to us...***

James 4:8

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Approach Him, in the name of Jesus, by faith and prayer, and he will draw nigh to you - he will meet you at your coming. When a soul sets out to seek God, God sets out to meet that soul; so that while we are drawing near to him, he is drawing near to us. The delicacy and beauty of these expressions are, I think, but seldom noted.

****It's in finding that peace in our hearts that passes all understanding...***

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

This peace passeth all understanding; it is of a very different nature from all that can arise from human occurrences; it is a peace which Christ has purchased, and which God dispenses; it is felt by all the truly godly, but can be explained by none; it is communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost.

****Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, found in the back of the Strong's Concordance...***

Published in 1890; public domain...

Wikipedia, the Online Encyclopedia

James Strong (August 14, 1822 – August 7, 1894) was an American Methodist Biblical scholar and educator, and the creator of Strong's Concordance . . . Strong was born in New York City and graduated, in 1844, as valedictorian from Wesleyan University. Subsequently, he was mayor of his home town on Long Island. Later, having settled in Flushing, New York, he pursued Biblical studies, held various local offices, and organized, built, and was the president of the Flushing railroad. In 1856 Wesleyan University granted him the degree of Doctor of Divinity (D.D.). From 1858 until 1861, Strong was both Acting President and Professor of Biblical Literature at Troy University (New York). In 1868 he became Professor of Exegetical Theology at Drew Theological Seminary, where he remained for twenty-seven years. In 1881 Wesleyan honored Strong with the

degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.). He died at Round Lake, New York in 1894 . . . His best known work is Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, first published in 1890, of which new editions are still in print. Numerous revisions, such as The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, along with adaptations of the concordance to translations other than the Authorized King James Version while retaining the "Strong's" or similar branding, such as the Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance are also available. "Strong's numbering" of Greek and Hebrew words, have dominated the enumeration of such words in Bible study helps to the present day, only recently being supplemented by Goodrick-Kohlenberger numbering.

END OF CHAPTER 3...

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