

# Kingdom News

The Kingdom is Yours; the power is Yours and the glory is Yours, forever... (Matt. 6:13)

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## *Motto for the year of 2012*

You are worthy, Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created. (Revelation 4:11 *KJV adapted*)

### **The Chief Cornerstone**



#### **The 5 W's of Life (*Why?*)**

We've come to the last of life's "5 W's" (*last*, implying simply the order in which we were led to sequence these discussions). You may, certainly, have chosen a different sequence.

In the July 2012 edition, we looked up to heaven and shouted, "What?" And the echo came back... "God IS..."

In the August 2012 edition, the Lord came back and said, it's My turn. Now, I will ask *you* two questions: 1) "Who do you say that the I AM is?" 2) "Who does your life say is *its* I AM?"

In the September 2012 edition, the Lord told us that the "when" that matters to Him is *when* He will vindicate His glorious name and execute His righteous judgment. It is *when* He will make our Lord's enemies His footstool.

Chief Cornerstone

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### **The Leadership Corner** *Leadership Living, Inc.*

#### **My Back Against the World – My Face Towards God**

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**All scripture is KJV paraphrased.**

We have now come to the month of November. There is so much going on in the Kingdom. You may or may not sense some of the activity. Nevertheless, God is up to some great things.

As we prepare for the holidays, we may find this year to be different than it was last year at this time. Let's take a moment to think about this. During the 2011 holiday season (Thanksgiving and Christmas) there were specific people in our lives. We may have had a job at a given employer, or we were the employer. It's possible we travelled to see friends and family, or they came to see us. Some of us were in school.

Now, as we approach the 2012 holiday season, are there things that are different than they were last year at this time? Are there new people in our lives, new relationships? Has anything changed with our employment or educational pursuits? What about where we live, go to church, or shop?

For many of us, there have been significant changes in our personal lives. Personally, I live in a different place than I did during the last holiday season. I also have very different personal relationships (some new people have come into my life, while some previous relationships

The Leadership Corner

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## Boot Camp

### The *Unconditional* Love of God



#### Fact or Fiction? *OR* In fact, a fiction?

The airways are cluttered with talk of the "unconditional love of God."

Since virtually "everyone" is talking about it; you won't mind if I join in the conversation, will you?

Can we do something different this time? Can we take this "conversation to the street?" Enough of being proper or "politically correct." Let's do it the good ole' fashioned way. You know ... where we each "say our piece and we sweep up the crumbs" when we're finished. Out of the gate, we'll "agree to disagree" and otherwise enjoy each other's company.

That being said, I'll open with a question: *Where did this notion of God's love being "unconditional" come from?* I mean, what is its *genesis* where did it begin? While we're on the topic, I suppose I should ask "what is its *revelation*, too?" How does it walk itself out, what does it reveal?

Is this the love child of "the John 3:16 version of the gospel" and the "no child left behind" initiative? I told you I didn't want to be politically correct.

I have two dispositions to the concept of God's love being "unconditional."

#### Disposition #1

As I understand it, there is a sense in which the love of God could be construed as "unconditional." The sense in which "God so loved the world that He gave..." (John 3:16) is the sense in which I can see the "unconditional" descriptive having a seat at the table. God's "*so loving the world*" and His "*giving His Only Begotten Son*" are displays of a love so great and unprovoked by anything external to the counsel of the will of God, Himself. In that sense I can see it as "unconditional" or without prerequisite.

#### Disposition #2

My concern is with the flagrant and unguarded use of

## Living Waters



### The Mind

### (A Terrible Thing to Waste)

My sister and I were communing over a few things that the Lord had been sharing with each of us. During this conversation the Lord very sweetly and un-intrusively began to share with us (*a portion of which*) has become this article.

**Caveat** – This is not intended to be *prescriptive*. That is, we're not asking you run out and begin to overhaul how you use your intellect. It is more intended to be *descriptive* in that this is something that the Lord disclosed to us in one of our conversations. We simply wanted to share it with you. If it genuinely blesses or frees you, then give God the glory. If you find it a bit terse and distasteful (fair enough) then disregard it altogether. Very likely the topic of this article will not *come up* at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Meaning that whether or not you believe what you read it will not be a "deal-breaker" in the grander scheme of things.

If you don't mind, we'll jump right into the middle of the conversation, between my sister and I.

" ... one of the problems that I believe that we will find, at length, is that we are using our mind (intellect) in ways it was *not* originally intended. The mind has the capacity to do quite a number of amazing things. The two that we'll talk about are its capacity to "understand" and to "know."

In a temporal sense, we have ascribed to the concept of "*knowing*" an ultimate-ness. For example, once a thing is "known" the road ends there. Whereas, when a thing is simply "understood" there's still room for negotiation, investigation, research, inquiry, etc. Very likely, we may find that the disposition of the heart of one who believes that they "know" a thing, is quite different from the disposition of the heart of one who believes they "understand." I'm going to stretch you a bit here, so go with me on this. You can get out of the car at the next major intersection if you like; but ride with me for a little bit. I submit to you

In the October 2012 edition, we asked, "Lord, ultimately "Where?" He said ..."*in you, in Me.*"

Here we are in November, asking "Why, Lord?" "Why all of this (time and space; or creation in general)?" In the July edition, we made reference to the question: For "WHAT" purpose have we been created?" We agreed to cover that in this edition.

The answer to the ultimate "Why" question (for this discourse) is "...*that they may know that I AM ....*" I thought this a peculiar response, when the Lord gave it.

Is there any, single thing that Our Lord wants, very clearly, for us to know more than that "He IS...?" All of the other values of our relationship with Him flow from this reality. Therefore everything He has done; everything He presently does; and everything He shall do will be directed by a singular objective: that we may know that "He IS... the I AM."

As a human being with painfully limited knowledge and visibility; I often shy away from the use of ultimate terms and language. Because only the Sovereign, Lord God can speak in "*ultimates.*" There is a great deal of "relativity" to our knowledge. That is to say, that the only things that we can really KNOW are the things that God reveals. Everything else, apprehended apart from the utterance or revelation of God, is suspect. Here we get a glimpse of why the Lord teaches that we must walk by faith, and not by sight.<sup>(1)</sup> Apart from the revelation of God; we really cannot trust (or in any real sense, interpret) what we see.

Throughout the concourses of our lives ... it is imperative that we come to KNOW that "*He IS, the great I AM.*" Now let's not take lightly the reality of what it means to KNOW God. We fancy ourselves that we KNOW Algebra, because we show up for class; answer a few random questions and turn in our homework (on time, most of the time). But it becomes embarrassingly clear that we do not KNOW Algebra, during Mid Term. And even more shamefully is the "D" we receive on our Final Exam.

And so it may be, with our conception of our knowledge of God and our knowledge of our relationship with Him. We may think that we know Him, because we show up for church services (*on time, most of the time*). We can quote a few random scriptures, and we read our Bible (when we can make time in our busy schedules). But it becomes embarrassingly clear that we do not KNOW Him, as we thought, when we faint in the day of

adversity. And even more shameful is the absence of figs (or other fruit) on the branches of our life.

Why?!? Because...we were created to KNOW Him.

- ❖ Every morning His mercies are renewed to us ... *why ... that we may KNOW Him as a merciful Father.*
- ❖ He suffers long with us ... *why ... that we may KNOW Him in His expressions of kindness and compassion.*
- ❖ He made Himself of no reputation, and took on the form of a servant ... *why ... that we may KNOW Him in His expressions of humility.*
- ❖ Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience through suffering ... *why ... that we may KNOW the meekness of God.*
- ❖ He spared not His only begotten Son ... *why ... that we may KNOW God's pre-commitment to His righteousness and judgment.*
- ❖ He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death ... *why ... that we may KNOW His disposition towards sin and unrighteousness.*

We were created to KNOW Him. Why !?!

Well there are many, many reasons. Although vital, this is not the most important reason (*but let's have a look anyway*). We were created to KNOW Him because it is by Him that we KNOW everything else. I submit to you that we cannot really KNOW anything except that it is KNOWN in its proper relationship to God. We know something of this reality when we hear Paul say, "I had not KNOWN sin, but by the Law."<sup>(2)</sup> And we ask, "Why is that, Paul? Why is it the case that you didn't KNOW what sin was, except by the Law?" Then Paul, points to King David, who said "The Law of the Lord is perfect, identifying for the soul, its need to be converted."<sup>(3)</sup>

Again, the answer to the ultimate question "Why?" is "*that we may KNOW Him.*" John says it this way, "This is life eternal, that they might KNOW You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."<sup>(4)</sup>

Let's revisit the idea that, "*we cannot really KNOW anything except that it is KNOWN in its proper relationship to God.*" I'll start the discussion here, and we'll finish it in the article entitled "*The Mind: A Terrible Thing to Waste.*" This will sound a bit cryptic at the beginning; I pray that it will land ever

so softly upon your heart, thereafter. The ONLY thing that can be KNOWN or that can be had as an object of knowledge is that which is REAL. That which is *not* REAL can be assumed; it can be conjectured; it can be argued; hypothesized or even "genuinely believed." But none of those activities of the mind, or the mouth, can make REAL, that which is *not*. ALL that is REAL is so, because it is really known of God as such. And not just known by God, but a thing has the attribute of "reality" ONLY because God has made it so. If God does not know a thing to be REAL, then it is *not*. Irrespective of how "real" it may "seem" or "feel." Circumstances or "context clues" may tend to give a thing the texture of "reality." But none of those things make it so. Again, if a thing ... a concept ... a situation, a fill in the blank... is REAL, then it is an object of God's omniscience; meaning that God knows it to be real. If God does not know it to be real, then no matter what we think, it is not real.

**Scriptural Example:** The scripture says, "Behold, I have given you power over all the power of the enemy." That's REAL. But often it doesn't "seem REAL" or it doesn't "feel REAL." It nevertheless is irrefutably REAL, and the enemy knows it so. Even the enemy cannot change that, but he can make you feel like it's not REAL. And if he can accomplish that, then you begin to "act" like it's not REAL, even though it very really is. Can you see the value to the enemy of working this way? **Practical Example:** if you injure someone through negligence. On some grounds they may have a right to sue you. It is the law. You can't change that; I can't change that. You may be inclined to make it "seem" as if they had no recourse. If you succeed, then they will begin to "act" as if they have no recourse. And voila, you've avoided a lawsuit. Such is the strategy of your enemy and mine. (My apologies for the example, it was not intended to sound crude, but to illuminate the point).

**Sidebar:** Now just because a thing is not REAL in the mind of God, does not mean that it cannot affect us. Because, if we think a thing to be REAL, when it is not, then we position ourselves in such a way as to give it presence. Although it very really is not, legitimately REAL. An extreme (and rather crass) example of this concept is the workings of a "paranoid" mind. It fancies many things REAL that are not. And the person so affected behaves as if the things, which it has conjured up, are REAL.

One reason that we're laboring over this truth is because it points us to "why" it is imperative that we KNOW God,

as He really is. When we KNOW God (we by Him) may know all things else. But apart from Him, we may suppose, we may guess, we may surmise, we may... but we can never KNOW a thing.

Just as I thought that I was finished with this article, reading over it again for my own personal refreshment, I had a "Who" question. Above, where it said that the answer to the question "why" was "*that they might know Him...*" And I heard the question, "who are *they*?" Which "they" are we talking about? Well it's clear that the use of the pronoun "*they*" refers to "*us*." But I submit to you that the other group is the "principalities and powers." Yep, God is going to MAKE them know something too. What do you mean, "says Who?"

*"... to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."*<sup>(5)</sup>

Still asking, *Why?!?* ... Still answering, "...that we may KNOW Him."

Why, Creation? ... that we may KNOW His Sovereignty.

Why, Calvary? ... that we may KNOW His Compassion.

Why the Resurrection? ... that we may KNOW His Power.

Why the Second Coming? ... that we may KNOW His Lordship.

Why Judgment? ... that we may KNOW His Righteousness.

Why Eternal Life? ... that we may KNOW His Love.

Next month ... *How?* <<<>

*Sr. Editor, JoAnn C. White, sMHG*

**Scripture References - King James Version (KJV), unless otherwise stated.**

(1) 2 Corinthians 5:7

(2) Romans 7:7

(3) Psalm 19:7 (*jcw version*)

(4) John 17:3 (*jcw version*)

(5) Ephesians 3:9-10

have ended).

During this holiday season I will experience God in a new and different way. As a result, I will also experience my environment with a totally new perspective. Here is where we begin our exploration of what God would say to us for the month of November.

As we journey through life, events come and go. People also come and go. The only one who is constant is our Heavenly Father. He is the one who will never leave us. He is the one who is ever faithful. Therefore, He is the one who we should “fix our eyes on.”

God told me recently that my back should be against the world and my face should be toward Him. He said I should have this fixated “stare” (if you will) on Him. When He said this, my heart was immediately on board. But, my mind still had a question mark. What does this mean to have my back against the world and my face toward God?

Having been a believer for several years I understand that God should be my focus. But, I was stuck on the part about having my back against the world. Thankfully, God didn’t allow me to wrestle with this concept too long. He gave me the interpretation of what He had said.

Think about when you are looking into a mirror. Let’s say you are getting ready for work in the morning and you are staring into the mirror. What do you see? Do you see yourself? Do you see things in the room? Maybe you can see what’s going on in another adjoining room or even outside. But, let’s ponder this a little further.

When we look into a mirror, our face is toward the mirror and our back is against what is behind us. Even though we can see things behind us, we are not looking directly at these objects. Instead, we simply see images of the objects in the room based on the reflection they have in the mirror.

God told me that my back should be against the world and my face should be toward Him. So, who is God in this case? He is the mirror.

Let’s go a little deeper. When I wash my face in the morning while looking into the mirror, I’m really not washing my face based on what is or is not there (i.e., dirt, a stray hair, etc.). Instead, I am washing my face based on what I see reflected in the mirror.

When we use a mirror to make decisions about our appearance, we do so because of what is reflected in the mirror, not what is actually the case. For example, if I’m trimming my hair using a mirror, I may see a strand that is longer than the others close to it. As a result, I may decide to clip this strand.

Now, in reality, the strand may or may not have been longer than the other hair strands. I made my decision based on what was reflected in the mirror. It was an image that I saw, not my actual hair.

In the natural realm, a mirror provides images of what is in our environment. And, depending on which mirror you or I use, the same item may look different if we use different mirrors. So, what does this have to do with God telling me that my back should be against the world and my face should be toward Him? Phenomenal question and it’s a great segue into the scriptures.

In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul speaks of a “kingdom” mirror and what happens when we interact with it. Scripture says that when we gaze at God it’s like we are looking into a mirror. And, as we hold our gaze steady, we become what we behold.

So, here is how this works. When we live our lives looking at our environment and reacting to it, we have our face toward the world (looking directly at it), and we have our backs toward God (looking away from Him).

When this happens, we wrestle with all kinds of issues because we can’t see our situations, the way God sees them. Therefore, we are not able to access His resources to deal with our situations (i.e., His wisdom, strength, knowledge, and careful coordination of events, etc.).

On the other hand, when we face God and have our backs toward the world, God begins to show us deeper parts of Himself (His glory), and as we interact with Him we become what we behold. We begin to see, hear, understand, and respond based on God’s perspective, not our own.

I’ll use a personal example that we can sink our teeth into. At our agency we teach a variety of classes. One of our programs has been on hold while we wait to receive approval to utilize a particular space for upcoming classes. One of our staff members kept

saying we need to run this class. But, my response was that we can't do a class until the classroom space has been approved.

Recently, I was chatting with this staff person and he was telling me about several people he had met who said they need the principles we teach in our class. As we were talking God spoke to me and said we are to not wait for approval to use a classroom to run this particular class. Instead, we can bring people in and work with them on an appointment basis (until the classroom space has been approved).

When I shared this with our staff person, he was in immediate agreement. He created and distributed a flier that lets people know they can come to our program by making an appointment with the program facilitator. Clients can receive one-on-one coaching and assistance, as well as some abbreviated curriculum.

This was the answer to the dilemma we were facing. We wanted to continue offering services, but we felt we couldn't do anything until we had a large enough classroom space. But God... He had us turn our backs to the world (our environment that said we couldn't do what we needed to do), and He had us turn our face toward Him. Now, we offer coaching and assistance as clients contact us.

When our faces were turned toward the world, we saw our situation as being "on hold." However, when we turned our backs to the world and our faces toward God, we saw a very different image of our situation. We saw an opportunity to provide comprehensive services focused on what individual clients may need.

When we looked at God, our vision changed. He caused us to see Him more clearly in our situation. As a result, we saw our situation from His perspective.

This is what God wanted me to know. He wants us (His people) to face Him. When we look at our environments and the situations we face, we are to turn our backs on what "we" see and turn our face to God. By doing so, we can see Him more clearly and then He can correct our vision so that we see a correct image of our situation. When this happens, we can take advantage of the resources God has for us to do what He has called us to do.

It is extremely important for us to see our situations the way God sees them. If we cannot see what God

sees, then we may not be able to work in harmony with what God wants us to do. As we stare at God we begin to see what He sees.

As we approach this holiday season, it is critical that we have our vision checked. God has some important things planned for us. But, we won't see them if we are not gazing at God.

May I make a suggestion? In our day-to-day activities, we have an opportunity to consult with God (throughout the day) asking Him to show us what is really happening in our environments. If someone says "no" to us, we can ask God what this means. If something doesn't seem to be going the way we think we need it to, we can ask God to show us what is really happening.

This is how we turn our backs against the world and turn our faces toward God. We ask Him to clarify what we think we see. Once He does this, we can respond appropriately to our circumstances.

The month of November will bring with it some amazing opportunities. If we are staring at God, we will also see what He is doing. Then, we can work in harmony with His plan for us.

Be blessed! <sup>[LL]</sup>

Joyce M. White, LMSW

## What???

What has God said to you?

What are you doing about what He has said?

What are you saying about what you do?

What is God doing about what you did and said?

- JoAnn C. White

the term, as it is proffered today. It seems that we use the term to intend that because God's love is "unconditional" (in quite a different sense); there is therefore nothing required on our part (*pre- or post-confession*). And that His unconditional love is equally applicable to anyone and EVERYONE, who wants to hide up under the skirts of that garment. If I were to say that mental posture was an egregious, double-blind error; it would be still too light a sentence against it. And we have not yet embarked upon the fallout or the natural outworking of such an ill-fated disposition of heart.

So that this does not result in a blood-bath, let me come across to your side of the avenue, and continue this conversation as if the love of God can safely be labeled as "unconditional." Let's see the potential implications of such a mindset.

From this place, we'll explore what the "unconditional" love of God, nevertheless, CANNOT mean.

It CANNOT mean ....

- 1) ... that God is so enamored with these clay jars (*spelled u-s*) that He disregards our disobedience and sin ... To do this He would have to deny Himself; for sin is an affront to the holiness of our Sovereign Lord God. Sin says of God; "...God does know that .... I can't help it."<sup>(1)</sup> It does not regard the fact that God has provided a "help meet."<sup>(2)</sup>
- 2) ... that God so loved the "world" that the "world" does not have to love Him back ... The first and great commandment is this: love the Lord God with all... Jesus said it this way; if you love Me you'll keep my commandments.
- 3) ... that we can live a reckless life here, and wake up in eternity without spot or wrinkle ... we must give an account of the deeds done in this body. And our works ... (*we hate that word, don't we? Perhaps it's because we don't understand it.*) Our works, will either approve or disapprove us; at the coming of our Lord.<sup>(3)</sup>

The "unconditional" love of God *cannot* be this whimsical, un-tethered, "never-can-say-good bye," "let's-all-just-get-along" type of love. Oh my bad, that's not love. While love is patient, and love is kind, love is not irresponsible. Love has both promises and demands; it both gives and expects to receive. God loves us; so that we may love Him back. And we don't have to look too far to see the reality of that. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. His commandments are not grievous."<sup>(4)</sup>

Can you bear one more consideration of the implications of this proverbial "unconditional" love? A question for you, parents. Imagine what type of child you would spawn if you exhibited the type of "unconditional" love that we often accuse God of having. Where there are no rules or responsibility. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. And God has no other alternative but to love us. As we eat His sop, and kick our heels up against Him; because of His "unconditional" love; He has no other choice but to "look the other way." Is that the "unconditional" love that we long for? Is it not the very concept of heart that makes us despise His Holiness? Calm down ... the scriptures say as much.

He saved them [*Israel*] from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. ... They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel. ... But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word. ... But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.<sup>(5)</sup>

And so says our own experience; we say "*familiarity breeds contempt*." When the heart says "His love is "unconditional;" it does not require anything of me." We are but two steps from despising it, altogether. No... no ... don't believe me. Look in your own bosom; let's look at our own life and experience. I believe that we will find that we forget and ignore anything, or anyone, that does not make demands on us. By a law of our nature, we must naturally forget those things that do not require us to do or to be anything different ... anything more. It's everywhere around us. *Life* requires something of us. *Reality* makes demands. It must!

- When we take a new job, we attend orientation; for the purposes of setting expectations.
- When we take marriage vows; we are told of our responsibilities and the demands of that covenant.
- When our children learn to drive, the drivers training course is for the purposes of setting expectations.
- When we go to school, we receive a syllabus, again setting expectations.
- "Rights of Passage;" and other creedal initiations and indoctrinations all set expectations.

There's no getting around it. In each of these cases (and millions more), there are things expected and required of us. We don't sing of the "unconditional" love of our new employer. We know that they expect something of us; and we think them well within their rights to do so. But of a God, Who has given all; we wince at His demands and recoil at His expectations. *That* there are expectations in life, is indispensable to life itself (on every level), isn't it?

One of the most beautiful and precious things about the infinite love of God is that if properly received, it draws out of us (ever so sweetly) a sublime reciprocation. King David said it well, "I will not offer to God anything that does not cost me something."<sup>(6)</sup> A sacrifice is nothing if it is not first the giving up of something dear, for something dear-er ... the giving up of something intimate; for something more intimate ... the giving up of something personal ... for Someone more Personal.

A true and abiding relationship with the Living God costs! It cost Him something and it will cost us something. More properly stated, it cost Him EVERYTHING, and it will cost us EVERYTHING. We need to settle that in our hearts. And stop looking at God as some type of Santa Claus; for whom a glass of milk and a couple of broken cookies will do.

I submit to you that a truly repentant heart will never say of God: "His love is "unconditional;" it does not require anything of me." I truly repentant heart says of God: "As an expression of His love for me; He has given all. As an expression of my love for Him; I shall give my all."

May I share the "duplicitous-ness" of this mindset?

We, like Israel, want God to be a Warrior and Judge when it comes to His requiting our enemy, for their misdeeds toward us. But we cannot conceive of a King and Father, Who will vindicate His own Righteousness against our vehement disregard and wanton neglect. Isn't that what Israel wanted? They wanted Jesus to judge the nations and indemnify them, even though Israel had no intention of submitting to His Lordship. I think we see how that cannot work.

**WARNING:** Please do not be misled by my use of the terms "require" and "demand." Please do not take them to mean that because God requires us to love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength; that this, in any way, implies that our response is equal to His gift. In no way is that possible. The gift of God can never, in an infinite number of eons, be

matched. But Jesus was delighted with the widow's two mites ... for she had given ALL. And He will be delighted with our two mites; provided they constitute our ALL and we are prepared cast them in.

God has always made demands on us. It cannot be any other way. All kings make demands of their servants ... all of them. And God has been making demands of us since Genesis 1:28. Our Lord Jesus followed in His Father's footsteps. Out of the gate, Jesus requires that we "*Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*"<sup>(7)</sup> The whole proclamation of the Gospel begins there. And it is sealed with "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.*"<sup>(8)</sup>

There was a time when God's "unconditional" love winked at our ignorance; but now His "unconditional" love commands all men, everywhere to repent.<sup>(9)</sup>

Whew!! Now that's one side of the argument. But there are other sides, lots of them. Suffice it to say that we cannot do them justice in this space. But let's look at one more facet of this peculiar stone.

There is a very real sense in which, God's love in fact does not require anything of us. We know this because the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>(10)</sup> So that reality stands of its own accord. The pinch here is that often when we talk about the "unconditional" love of God, we do not do it to bring glory to His infinite kindness and graciousness. We often defer to the "unconditional" love of God, when we want to be excused of our duty to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Him. We sing of the "unconditional" love of God, as if to say; "Yes, I know that I should love and obey Him, but even if I don't, He still loves me anyway. He has to, His love is *unconditional.*" As we go on in our personal rebellion against His generosity.

Can I say something to you? The sense in which God's love is "unconditional" is the same sense in which that "unconditional" love obligates Him to, at length, judge rebels as outlaws and appoint them their portion with the unredeemed. God's love is so infinite that He loves those who would rather go to hell, then submit to His Sovereign government. And I have to wonder if that reality (*that God loves us*) will not be one of the things that will be so tormenting in hell.

So ... "yes" ... I guess you're right. God's love is in some sense "unconditional." But it is not in such a sense "unconditional" as that God will forget that the

blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, is sufficient to purge our consciences from dead works, so that we may serve the living God.<sup>(11)</sup> And it is not of such a sense "unconditional" as that God will be mocked; whatsoever we sow, that also shall we reap. If we sow to the wind, we are certain to reap the whirlwind. And if we sow to our flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. But if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.<sup>(12)</sup> Nor is it of such a sense "unconditional" as that God will permit rebels (*those of us who refuse to submit to His Lordship on earth*); to traipse our dirty feet along those streets of gold. I believe He made Himself plain to Peter when He said, If you do not allow Me to wash you (in this world), you won't be Mine (in the next).<sup>(13)</sup>

Perhaps we should take a new look at an old cliché.

One of my mentors said that (*my use of language*) "a mark of maturity is identifying what you **dis**believe, as much so as corroborating what you "do" believe."<sup>(14)</sup> Have we learned anything from the Bereans? They received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily; to discern whether those things, which they heard, were so.<sup>(15)</sup> It seems that we should go and do likewise. Just because someone says that the love of God is "unconditional" doesn't make it so, in the sense in which they present it. Measure the veracity of the statement against the truth of the scriptures.

Well it was nice talking with you. Whew, I hadn't done that in such a long time. In fact, I don't believe that you and I have ever taken a conversation "to the streets." Have we? Perhaps we should do this more often. As the days grow darker, the more we tend to skirt issues that need to be brought into the Light of Day.

For now I bid you God's best.

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*<sup>(16)</sup> <[BC]>

Sr. Editor, JoAnn C. White, sMHG

**Scripture References - King James Version (KJV), unless otherwise stated.**

<sup>(1)</sup> Genesis 3:5

<sup>(2)</sup> Genesis 2:18; John 14:16-18

<sup>(3)</sup> Matthew 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Peter 1:17

<sup>(4)</sup> John 14:15; 1 John 5:3

<sup>(5)</sup> Psalm 106

<sup>(6)</sup> 2 Samuel 24:24

<sup>(7)</sup> Matthew 4:17

<sup>(8)</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>(9)</sup> Acts 17:30 (*jcw version*)

<sup>(10)</sup> Revelation 13:8

<sup>(11)</sup> Hebrews 9:14

<sup>(12)</sup> Galatians 6:7-8; Hosea 8:7

<sup>(13)</sup> John 13:8

<sup>(14)</sup> 1John 4:1

<sup>(15)</sup> Acts 17:10-11

<sup>(16)</sup> Hebrews 13:20-21

that, although we use the terms "to know" and "to understand" interchangeably: there is a certain way in which the mind or intellect was created to "understand." And there is a certain means by which the mind was created to "know." And if we get these mixed up, it produces the kinds of human arrogance and pseudo-superiority that we see parading itself on the stages of this life.

Let's unpack a few of these boxes, shall we.

There is a certain means by which the mind was created to "know." Quick reference to the article in the Chief Cornerstone column (this month) entitled *The 5 W's of Life (Why?)*. The only things that can be truly "known" are the things that are "REAL." You may also recall that the concept of REALITY finds its definition from the omniscience of God.

**Except from *The 5 W's* article** - "ALL that is REAL is so, because it is really known of God as such. And not just known by God, but a thing has the attribute of "reality" ONLY because God has made it so. If God does not know a thing to be REAL, then it is not. Irrespective of how "real" it may seem or "feel."

**Scriptural Example:** The scripture says, "Behold, I have given you power over all the power of the enemy." That's REAL. But often it doesn't "seem" REAL or it doesn't "feel" REAL. It never the less is an irrefutably REAL, and the enemy knows it so. Even the enemy cannot change that, but he attempts to make us feel like it's not REAL. And if he can accomplish that, then we begin to "act" like it's not REAL, even though it very really is. Can you see the value to the enemy of working this way? **Practical**

**Example:** if you injure someone through negligence. On some grounds they may have a right to sue you. It is the law. You can't change that; I can't change that. You may be inclined to make it "seem" as if they had no recourse. If you succeed, then they will begin to "act" as if they have no recourse. Voila, you've avoided a lawsuit. Such is the strategy of your enemy and mine. (My apologies for the example, it was not intended to sound crude, but to illuminate the point).

One reason for all of the "plowing" is so that we understand whereupon the following statement stands. *The mind was created to receive its "knowledge" from God; and nowhere else. We were only supposed to know a thing to be real, on the basis of what God has said. And so we see the scaffolding of the scripture: "Let God be true and every man liar."*

Allow me to take a quick detour; there is a bush ablaze, but not consumed. Shall we turn aside to see? In Romans 3:3-4 a most precious exposure lends itself to this topic.

*For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou might be justified in thy sayings, and might overcome when thou art judged.*  
(1)

**Translation:** Paul was saying (among other things) to the body of believers at Rome, that God had chosen our Jewish brothers and had given to them the oracles of God. And if some do not believe this reality, it does not undo, what God has done, and what God very really KNOWS to be true. Paul goes on to quote Psalm 51:4b and say that here is the ground upon which one may safely trust. That if God has said a thing, we may certainly KNOW it to be true. All seeming evidence to the contrary. God's word establishes (or is an expression of) that which God, Himself, knows to be REAL. Furthermore, God's word is SO REAL that for the ones who will believe it; and hold it as the quintessential expression of REALITY, it will indemnify them, as they speak it and will acquit them of any judgment set against them. (**Disclaimer:** the scripture that Paul quotes has God as its subject. But I submit to you that for those who will reckon God's word as truth against all comers; they will have this same testimony. The truth of God's word will indemnify both God and the man who holds it.)<sup>(2)</sup>

Now we're back on course, *The mind was created to*

*receive its "knowledge" from God; and nowhere else. Knowledge comes from God. What God has said, may be KNOWN; all things else, may be "understood."*

There is a certain way in which the mind or intellect was created to "understand." This "way" is by the use or apprehension of data, intelligence, information, experience, study, etc. We receive stimulation horizontally from the world around us; by way of our senses. This stimulation is then transduced (*converted*) into some form of data received and stored by the mind. What happens next is of vital importance. Perhaps information that we receive via the senses, should be catalogued as something we "understand" until we have God's disposition on the matter. And if we do not receive God's mind on the subject, perhaps it should remain an object of our "understanding" versus being ascribed the label of "knowledge."

An example would be useful here, wouldn't it? Let's see ... okay, let's take the heavily debated concept of "Evolution." I know ... I'm a sucker for Goliaths. I like to pick fights with the big dogs, I'm crazy (*pray for me*). Evolution, though merely a theory (and perhaps more like a hypothesis) at its origin; has now been elevated to the ranks of "knowledge." And this has happened notwithstanding two strikes against it: 1) It has yet to be proven. And 2) the scriptures do not support it, because God has said otherwise. But see the arrogance of some of the proponents of the theory of Evolution. You could not prove to them that evolution was NOT a fact, or foregone conclusion, "to save their lives." And *they* could not prove otherwise, "if it cost them their lives."

And so we see the dangers of ascribing to the seat of "knowledge" that which has not passed muster with God.

Let briefly talk about some of the implications of confusing "knowledge" and "understanding." First let's restate the positions:

- 1) A thing may safely be considered "knowledge" which God, Himself, knows to be an object of knowledge. All things else cannot be properly so called.
- 2) That which cannot be corroborated with what God has said, should perhaps remain a thing "understood" under our present light.

**Caveat** – The same thing may be "known" one way

by Person A and "understood" another way by Person B. We see this in Paul's discourse on "eating meat offered to idols"<sup>(3)</sup> Here Paul says, that one man may *understand* (and thus believe) that *eating meat offered to idols* is wrong. And another may *know* that there is only one God; and whether or not meat has been offered to idols means nothing to him and thus has no effect on his conscience. The same comparison is made with the observance of "holy days." One man may *understand* (and thus esteem) specific days as holy to God. Another, man may *know* that all days are holy to God; and may therefore not single out a particular day as an observance.<sup>(4)</sup>

May I submit to you ... better still I'll share my present disposition to these two "frames of reference." I am obliged to hold as an object of *knowledge* that which I have received of the Lord. Or that which His Word corroborates. All things else, I hold as an object of my *understanding*. This positions my heart to continue to seek the Lord's leadership and counsel. I am predisposed to defer to His omniscience; and to not lean on my own understanding.<sup>(5)</sup>

*He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not; neither "understands" nor "knows"*  
*He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, can be brought to "understand" or to "know"*  
*He who knows not, and thinks that he knows, is unaware that "knowledge (for knowledge sake) puffs up"*

Please do not go away misunderstanding me to say that we can never "really" know anything. That is quite far from what is being shared here. Rather what is being said is that we may be better served if we are discreet in what we esteem as an object of certain *knowledge*. We may *understand* many things, and we may *know* that which God has made known to us.

Much love and respect. -\*LW\*

Sr. Editor, JoAnn C. White, sMHG

**Scripture References - King James Version (KJV), unless otherwise stated.**

- (1) Romans 3:4
- (2) Romans 8:33-34
- (3) 1 Corinthians 8
- (4) Romans 14:5-6
- (5) Proverb 3:5-7

**Are You Sure?**

There is a healthy contemplation that drives us to check our commitment to our various relationships with others. While I have your attention may I ask another question? Do you ever wonder if you're really saved? I don't mean to intrude ... okay maybe I do intend to intrude. Do you contemplate your loyalty and commitment to your relationship "with Christ" very specifically? Respectfully, we are not talking here about your relationship with a religious institution. We're asking about a very up-close and personal relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ. The scriptures encourage us to periodically check our "fruit." We are admonished to work out your own soul's salvation with fear and trembling.<sup>(1)</sup>

I can just imagine Jesus standing before the fig tree, asking "Hey guys, what type of tree is this?" His disciples replied (almost snickering), "My Lord, it's a fig tree." And Jesus asks again, "How can you tell, that this is a fig tree?" His disciples reply again (almost bursting at the seams), "Teacher, we can tell by the leaves." Jesus once again, "Okay, let Me ask you guys one more question ... what is the purpose of a fig tree, if it won't bear figs." They all fell silent. Jesus cursed the fig tree saying, "Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit, My Father will remove. It will not be allowed to continue to make demands of (or trouble) the ground."<sup>(2)</sup> He looked at the disciples and walked away en route to Bethany.<sup>(3)</sup> So I ask again, how do we know that we have a personal covenant with God?

**May I make a few suggestions on ways to discover the truth?<sup>(4)</sup>**

1. How does your covenant with Jesus Christ affect your concept of God and your attitude towards Him?
2. How does your relationship with God affect your attitude towards Jesus Christ (Him as a Person and His Lordship over your life)?
3. How does your covenant with God affect your attitude towards the Holy Scriptures?
4. How does your relationship with Christ affect your attitude towards your "self-life" or your "flesh"?
5. How does your covenant with Christ affect your relationship with and attitude towards your fellow Christians?
6. How does your relationship with Jesus affect your relationship with and attitude towards the world?
7. Last, but in no way least, how does your covenant with Jesus affect your attitude towards sin?

Perhaps we should take the next couple of weeks or months and grapple with this? Try to answer each question thoroughly in light of the scripture's mandates on each of these respective relationships. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.<sup>(5)</sup>

**Be Sure!**

Scripture References - King James Version (KJV), unless otherwise stated.

- (1) Philippians 2:12                      (2) John 15:1-2; Luke 13:7
- (3) Matthew 21:17-19
- (4) Gleanings and adaptations from A.W. Tozer's Man: The Dwelling Place of God, p.62-68                      (5) Hebrews 13:20-21

❧ SUMMARY ❧

**The Chief Cornerstone**  
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As a human being with painfully limited knowledge and visibility; I often shy away from the use of ultimate terms and language. Because only the Sovereign, Lord God can speak in "ultimates." There is a great deal of "relativity" to our knowledge. That is to say, that the only things that we can really KNOW are the things that God reveals. Everything else, apprehended apart from the utterance or revelation of God, is suspect.

**Boot Camp**

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The "unconditional" love of God *cannot* be this whimsical, un-tethered, "never-can-say-good bye," "let's-all-just-get-along" type of love. Oh my bad, that's not love. While love is patient, and love is kind, love is not irresponsible.

*Life* requires something of us. *Reality* makes demands. It must!

Just because someone says that the love of God is "unconditional" doesn't make it so, in the sense in which they present it. Measure the veracity of the statement against the truth of the scriptures.

❧ SUMMARY ❧

**The Leadership Corner**

When we use a mirror to make decisions about our appearance, we do so because of what is reflected in the mirror, not what is actually the case.

In the natural realm, a mirror provides images of what is in our environment. And, depending on which mirror you or I use, the same item may look different if we use different mirrors.

Scripture says that when we gaze at God it's like we are looking into a mirror. And, as we hold our gaze steady, we become what we behold.

**Living Waters**

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There is a certain way in which the mind or intellect was created to "understand." This "way" is by the use or apprehension of data, intelligence, information, experience, study, etc.

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