

What is Our Assignment?

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It is such an honor to be among people who obviously are in love with the same One I am. That always creates a comfortable environment. Whether there's two gathered together or two million – it doesn't matter – if our hearts are one with the Lord. That unity affects our worship time together.

I am often somewhat amused – as I have a rather over-developed sense of humor. ☺ But it's amusing for me to hear all the new songs in the Church today. No matter where I go, week after week after week, as I am in different churches – I never know the songs anymore. What's more amusing to me is that every new song that is sung reminds me of one of the oldies from my youthful days that carried exactly the same message. I mean, how far can you go into the woods? Halfway? And then you're on the way out again. ☺ We used to sing, "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All His wonderful passion and purity! Oh, Thou Spirit divine! All my nature refined – till the beauty of Jesus is seen in me." Today we're singing the same message – the tempo is a little faster ☺ – and we say different words, but it means exactly the same thing. It is an exciting day! Do you know that? It is an exciting day in the Lord!

I would like to read two verses from the Book of Genesis and then a longer passage from Hebrews. Genesis, chapter 1, verses 26 and 27 begin: "*And God said...*" *God said.* Now, when a preacher reads the Word, he or she gets new thoughts with every sentence and we're prone to stop and preach it. This is one of those times. ☺ So, indulge me for just a moment. ☺ Whenever you see: "*And God said*" you better stop and salute! Okay, let's go on...

"And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them....'" What God is saying here is: "Let us make mankind" – human beings. *"...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."*

That small portion of Scripture lays the foundation for us to turn now to Hebrews, chapter 2. I'll let you read it without interruption ☺ from The Message (actually a paraphrase of the Scriptures, but a very good one): *"It's crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we've heard so that we don't drift off. If the old message delivered by the angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, do you think we can risk neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on to us by those who heard it from Him. All the while God was validating it with gifts through the Holy Spirit, all sorts of signs and miracles, as He saw fit.*

God didn't put angels in charge of this business of salvation that we're dealing with here. It says in Scripture, 'What is man and woman that you bother with them; why take a second look their way? You made them not quite as high as angels, bright with Eden's dawn light; then you put them in charge of Your entire handcrafted world.'

When God put them in charge of everything, nothing was excluded. But we don't see it yet; don't see everything under human jurisdiction. What we do see is Jesus, made 'not quite as high as angels,' and then, through the experience of death, crowned so much higher than any angel, with a glory 'bright with Eden's dawn light.' In that death, by God's grace, He fully experienced death in every person's place.

It makes good sense that the God who got everything started and keeps everything going now completes the work by making the Salvation Pioneer perfect through suffering as He leads all these people to glory. Since the One who saves and those who are saved have a common origin, Jesus doesn't hesitate to treat them as family, saying, 'I'll tell My good friends, My brothers and sisters, all I know about You; I'll join them in worship and praise to You.'

Again, He puts Himself in the same family circle when He says, 'Even I live by placing My trust in God.' And yet again, 'I'm here with the children God gave Me.'

Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by His death. By embracing death, taking it into Himself, He destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.

It's obvious, of course, that He didn't go to all this trouble for angels. It was for people like us, children of Abraham. That's why He had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when He came before God as High Priest to get rid of the people's sins, He would have already experienced it all Himself – all the pain, all the testing – and would be able to help where help was needed."

I want to ask a question that is on the hearts and in the minds of many people today: **“What’s going on?”** I mean – here we are in this church – and thank God for this local church! I truly thank God for pastors and people who really understand that *“the Kingdom of God is at hand”* (Mt.4:17). *“Go ye into...”* every bar – No! ☺ *“...all the world and preach the Gospel”* (Mk.16:15). I’m so proud of men (and women) who are not afraid to go into some “ify” places to preach repentance. I’m proud of this pastor for filling this place with “bikers” not long ago. Who needs it more than they? Some of us are too pious – or, too educated – or – just too boring! ☺ – to handle those kinds of things. But look what the Lord is doing today! **He is breaking every mold that is not the one in which He made us.** Now, that’ll preach the whole sermon. If you take just that much and chew on it a little while – we could say, “in Jesus’ Name, amen,” and you could be out of here. But we’re not going to do that, ☺ I’m going to expand on it a little. ☺

“Let us make man in our image.” Out of the very same – pardon the common word: “stuff” – He made everything that was made. There was nothing made that was not made by Him (Jn.1:3). Is that Scripture? Of course it is. (cf.Eph.3:9; Col.1:16,17).

In the very *image* of Himself – Himself, Christ – who came here, suffered, went through all the things that we just read from The Message, that makes it so clear by using our every day language. I apologize if any of you were offended by our using a paraphrase, and I forgive you. ☺ But we have to know what’s going on today. We cannot afford to be tripped up by formal word usage (some of it obsolete) and difficult-to-follow sentence construction – either of which may cloak the clearer understanding.

If you turn on your television set these days (September), you will be reminded of the horror of hijacked airplanes flying into the World Trade Center buildings in NYC (in 2001), the killing of thousands of people and the frustration of millions. We never expected anything like that to ever happen in this nation but we need to be reminded of it. We need to be thankful to God that it didn’t go any further than it did. We need to understand that we have a President who, with all of his mistakes, can stand up and admit: “I’ve made a lot of mistakes, but I’ve learned a lot.” I really do appreciate that. We need to pray more today than we’ve ever prayed for our leaders and the up-coming elections with all of the inherent details. And we understand that – but – the common question that is held before our God still is: **“What’s going on?”**

Over the past few years, we had a whole series of fictional books that talked about those people who are going to be “left behind” when the Rapture of the Church occurs. I read every one of them because I grew up under that dispensational teaching and they really met my need. I could see this happening and then that happening and then that will happen and then that will happen and then ::ZIP!:: I’m outta here! ☺

I really liked those books better than the next one I read that said just the opposite. It proclaimed, “left behind and happy to be!” ☺ The second author went on to say that we’re not going up, we’re just going to get better and the Kingdom will be established here. And I cried myself to sleep! ☺

But I don't really know the answer that you want me to know – are we going up before the Tribulation? Halfway through it? Or at the end? I honestly don't know. I feel it's pretty “tribble.” How many of you have had a lot of *trouble* and you feel it's a pretty tribble moment right now?

Then you pick up the newspaper and read what's going on in the world these days. If you try to tell those people that it's going to get worse, they're likely to say – “DUH! ☺ Who cares? It can't get any worse than this! We're sitting here dying and...” and all of these things. I know these kinds of things go through your minds (and obviously mine), but we don't often address them from the pulpit. We give little bits and pieces here and there, and hopefully you'll do something profitable with them.

But – when God created us (from Genesis, we read the 2 verses) He said, “I'm creating man for a couple reasons. One is so that they will be *sons*. I want many sons! I don't just want one Son, but I will make one perfect Son, and He will show them how to live.” (cf. Heb.2:10).

Does anyone know John 3, verse 16? “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son.*” Now don't panic, thinking: “Oh, I know where she's going.” You don't have a clue! ☺ Stay tuned! ☺

We're so afraid of saying “*sons of God.*” You know – “...that we're all the exact same as Jesus.” That isn't true. Jesus is the same substance – or the same “stuff” – as God. But Jesus, when He died – remember: He lived in a flesh-body on this earth and He died, just as our bodies will – but when He died, He was at that moment in *total trust* that the LORD (Yahweh) would raise Him up. God was the Resurrection and the Life in Christ – so that Christ could be the Resurrection and the Life in everyone who would receive Him (Jn.1:12; Jn.11:25). That's the message – the Good News – that we carry to the world. It's so simple – Jesus died for everyone – He rose for everyone. But “everyone” isn't going to be saved – even though the choice is theirs to make.

We live in a crazy time when we don't want to offend anyone. Hello. The truth is you cannot cease from offending people who have set themselves against God. Anyone who has set or fixed it in his mind: “There is no God” or “He's not telling me what to do” or “I don't believe this... I don't believe that...” – there's no place to go with a person who makes and adheres to those statements. You can be diverted by the enemy in your course (or your purpose), by spending lots of time trying to go over and over all the appropriate verses. The Bible speaks of those times as “senseless arguments” (2Tim.2:23) – debating with such hardened people. We need to be sensitive to those situations because there are genuinely hungry ones out there that really would love to hear something positive.

I'm 77 now and I have seen a few things and I've wasted lots of time on people who just wanted to talk. The enemy has allowed me to expend my energies on people that have no intention of hearing the Gospel or being changed by a touch from God's hand.

The Holy Spirit wants to give you and me *discernment* to know where to spend our energies, how much to give and when to say, “If that is your stance and your stand, I cannot penetrate it.” Then our only remaining responsibility is to walk away from them and pray, “God, You alone can get through to this one, so You must do something.”

Now I am really a little – I was going to say “a little ticked” but that wouldn't sound very nice. ☺ So, I'll say it this way: I am disturbed in my spirit ☺ at the weariness of God's people. They are weary “doing well.” The Bible says, “Don't do it! – *Be not weary in well-doing.*” (Gal.6:9; 2Thes.3:13; 1Cor.15:58). Now if our energies were really directed by the Holy Spirit, every place we go, we would either plant (sow), water, or reap (1Cor.3:6,7).

We have to learn this – we have to see this truth. For if we don't understand it we're going to be wasted and we'll end up with nothing but leaves (no fruit, no harvest) – nothing to bring to the Master. It then will be our lament: “But I've worked my whole life for God! I worked in that church. I gave myself

completely. I did this and I did that....” You see, there comes a point when we have to know that if we’re not *directed* by the Spirit of God to do good – “do good” isn’t being called for.

Is this too heavy? Would you prefer something lighter? “Mary had a little Lamb – Thank God!” ☺
“And He’s worthy to be praised!”

So – through Christ – or as 1 Corinthians 15:21 says, “*For since by man came death [Adam], by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*” If we receive Christ!

We hold the whole answer for society’s questions or problems today. It is: “Jesus Christ.” That’s our answer. There’s no good in you and there’s no good in me, but Christ alone (Isa.64:6; Jn.14:17; Rom.7:18). “*Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights... in whom is no variableness*” (Jas.1:17). He’s “*the same yesterday – today – forever!*” (Heb.13:8). He lives within us (Gal.2:20)! I carry Him. I walk with Him. I talk with Him. I want Him to show Himself every place I go!

Some times, when I see *opportunities*, I’m not hesitant and I simply move in. At other times, when I see *need*, I try to hammer my way in. I’m sure you understand what that means. You know you can’t hammer your way into a heart. Counselors know the truth of that. People can make an appointment, but if they really don’t want help, you simply can’t help them. You have all their answers. You can be truly great at listening and counseling and giving advice. You can be prayed up and know the Word. But the whole truth is, if they don’t want help they can just sit there looking at you.

In fact, I bet you (oh, I don’t say “I bet you”) but – I bet you ☺ – that a major portion of the counselees that supposedly come for help, can use the same words you use when trying to help them. Sure! They know the vocabulary. Years ago my job was in probation work – for 5 years. When the girls would come into my office to talk, they could throw the whole thing at me. “Oh, I’m slightly schizoid in personality and....” They knew all these things and just spit it out right at me, and I’d think, “That was my line!” ☺

But you see, “lines” aren’t cutting it today. LIFE – reality – is what people want to see. They want to be amazed with your life! They want to see what works! They want tangible evidence. “What is it about you?” That’s what Peter was telling us to be ready for: “*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*” and then get ready – “*to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that lieth in you.*” (1Pet.3:15).

Young people? If you’re *living Jesus* – not simply *for* Jesus – if you’re living the life of Christ, get ready to give some answers – because other young people are going to inquire: “How come you’re so happy? How come you’ve made it through? How come you seem to be doing so...? What is it about you!?” We could just sing – “His name is wonderful!” But your answer is: “Let me show you! I know a man...”

The simplicity of the Gospel has to return!

So, where are we today? What’s happening? May I first ask you this? Would you know the answer to this next question? I mean, you know the purpose for which you were made – because we just read it in Hebrews 2 – but do you know the answer to this: **What is your assignment?**

What is your assignment? You have to know that! You don’t get through a course until you have studied and know your assignment. Your teacher doesn’t just *suddenly* come out with a statement like this: “Okay, I’m going to grade you on what I know.” No. You’re assigned something to study so that then, when the questions are given to you – *for the test* – you have the answers.

So what about us? Is our assignment merely to come to church, Sunday after Sunday, to enjoy the fellowship.... There are so many great churches for fellowship. They’re very busy. They have

something going on all the time. I think it's a beautiful thing, by the way – coming together in love and fellowship – really caring about one another.

But, is that our assignment? Are we simply to be able to say, “Well, we had this many people this Sunday, and we had that many people Thursday, and we had that many at the Baby Shower...” and so forth? Is that our assignment? To come together and count noses? No? Well, let me ask you this then: is our assignment – mine and yours – I'm talking about individually now – is my assignment to win the world? It's such an easy answer to say, “Yes,” but I can't do it! It's impossible for me, as an individual, to take on that whole task.

What really has God assigned us to do? “Well, you remember, He said, ‘*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*’” Yes, He did – and we are. Not *all* of us going *everywhere*, but all of us are going *somewhere*.

But the most *uncomfortable* people that I meet are the ones who haven't a clue what their assignment is. And it's so simple! It's a little 3-letter word. Are you ready? ☺ Our assignment is to L – E – T. Let. “*Let this mind be in you which was in Christ*” (Phil.2:5). *Let the wisdom of God flow to you* (cf.Col.1:9). Let – let – let. *Let the Spirit work in you* (cf.Eph.3:20). Let.

It's His Word that will win (cf.Heb.4:12). It's His Word that will heal (Ps.107:20). It's His Word that will change – men and women (Rom.12:2). Look at someone who has totally changed in lifestyle. A pastor recently gave testimony to having been one thing and now is totally different. Something happened to him. No more drinking. No more running with the wrong crowd. Everything changed in his life! He has been totally changed by the power of God's Word! And now He is the pastor of a growing church.

We love to quote Scripture – and I'm sorry to say this – but I think we quote things rather lightly. We like these kinds of verses: “*All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new*” (2Cor.5:17) and that is definitely a wonderful Scripture and a wonderful Truth – in some people! Others have prayed a prayer – repeated some words – or raised the hand – or thrown a kiss to the leader. ☺ They made some form of acknowledgement and said, “Yes, I accept,” but there has been no – being – born – again! No transfer from the old nature to the new nature. So they then spend their whole Christian life *trying* instead of *letting*.

That's where our frustration is today. *Trying* to be good. *Trying* to be like Christ. *Trying* to look the right way. *Trying* to act the right way. *Trying* to speak the right words. Endeavoring. In other words, being a Christian is a whole lot of work! And it depends on what church you go to how much work it is ☺ because we've come so far away from the Word! You know – in some churches, everything fun is sin. ☺

How then, can we get there from where we are? We're all born in sin, “*shapen in iniquity*” (Ps.51:5) – and if you don't believe that, just watch a tiny little baby as she grows. There's an innate selfishness – an attitude from birth: “I want what I want when I want it!” ☺ And as they grow a little, you'll see the little fights between the kids: “That's mine!” “No! I want it!” “But it's mine!” Do you know what I'm saying?

How do we get beyond that self-centered nature? It depends on what level of maturity you have reached – how old you are in the Lord. Some people just see Him as Santa Claus. “Lord, gimme this and gimme that and gimme... and ... me... and ... and, oh, yes – thank You. Thank You.” And they're about as grateful as an only child on Christmas morning! ☺ It isn't simply a matter of saying “Thank You” that God really wants. He appreciates that, truly, but if it doesn't come from the heart, it isn't going to be a “life of thanksgiving.” Is that clear? He's after the heart.

Yours may be a praying church. You join the city-wide or state-wide prayer patterns set out for your area. And bless you for that – that is excellent! It’s commendable when we join with other groups in the Body of Christ on behalf of anything that is from God and I expect He will honor those efforts. But – what if? For example – what if the wrong people (not the ones we told God to do – in Jesus’ Name! ☺) – what if the wrong people are elected and get into office? How mad are you going to be?

Haven’t you heard it before? The whines cry out: “I’ve fasted. I’ve prayed. I commanded. I demanded. I read the Word – to Him! He knew exactly what we wanted!”

So – **what’s going on?** We posed that question earlier.

Well, I’ll tell you where we are right now. **We are in the heaviest moment of testing that I** (in my 77 years) **have ever experienced!** And the testing, as I understand it, the testing could be summed up in one general word: **Trust!** If God’s people don’t trust Him through these difficult days, our witness is gone! If we have no more hope than the unsaved – if we completely fall apart in difficult circumstances – if we cannot demonstrate that we do trust God through it all – where is our witness?

If I can come to God in prayer and fasting and demand what I really believe is – or think *should be* – His will... Are you there? *Should be His will!* (And in case He forgets, I tell Him: “IT SHOULD BE YOUR WILL! – in Jesus’ name!” ☺) Now, if He can say “No” to me – deny my specific request – and have exactly the same response from me – as if He had said “Yes” – then I have passed the test. But if I am angry with God... Pardon me, but that is so stupid! ☺ Think about it! I mean it – think that one through....

Look at it this way: if I said to a 9-year-old boy, “I want you to come over here and beat that wall down – just use your hands. And then I want you to get rid of that platform over there. Just beat it down.” He could obediently come over, beat his little fists bloody trying hard to do what I wanted, but wouldn’t move anything. That’s about what happens when you get mad at God! ☺ “Alright, God! I asked You (nicely ☺) and I gave You 40 sincere days! – and I’m not coming back again!” Can’t you hear the great vocal drama in that last part? “There will be no sacrifices from me!” ☺ Now, we don’t actually say that – but we do say it. The Lord looks right on the heart (1Sam.16:7) and knows it all! You know how I know these things. ☺

There are times in all of our lives when we fail the test! Now I’m going to tell you what God does when we fail a test. We get to take it over! And over! ☺ You cannot fail a test with God – it’s just – over – and over – and.... That’s why you need us old ones: “I’ve been this way before!” “Yes, you have – maybe you’ll pass this time!” ☺

We have to pass the tests because God has to have (are you hearing me?) sons on earth – before He has sons in heaven (see Rom.8:19; 1Jn.3:2). We are “*the light of the world*” (Mt.5:14). We are “*the salt of the earth*” (Mt.5:13). Those are Jesus’ actual words – “*You are the light of the world.*” So, I ask, “How bright is your light?” If you’re angry with God, it’s not real bright!

In fact, if you go over to Colossians, chapter 3, it says, “*If you be risen with Christ...*” (vs.1). Now that’s what takes place with a real born again experience. You die – you give up your “self.” We sing it in our worship services: “You’ve taken every part of me – it’s Yours, Lord. If You see anything else – if You missed a liver – take it. Everything I am or have or hope to be is Yours.”

When we come to that place *::BOOM!::* we die! “*Old things are passed away*” (2Cor.5:17). You’re dead to your own desires – to your own self – your own selfishness (see Rom.6). But I’ve been in churches that never got up! The only time you ever get any emotion from them is when you sing “The Old Rugged Cross.” ☺ “So, I’ll cherish that old...” And I do too! I do – I do – I do! I cherish what He did on the cross! Without the blood, I wouldn’t be here!

But I didn't stay there – dead! There came life! There came resurrection! There came purpose! Sunday's a-comin'! Friday came – the crucifixion – but Sunday is the Resurrection moment! In your life, there's a Sunday! There's a rising! God didn't kill you to have you just lie there waiting for the Day of Rapture! ☺ **He killed everything that was unlike Him – because you let Him!**

Whether it's in a song we sing from the heart, or our spoken prayer when we said, "Take all that I have and am and hope to be! I'm Your's Lord!" He wrote that down! It's in His memory book. So later, down the way – when things are tough for me and prayers don't seem to be answered and so on – and I say, "God! What are You doing?" He pulls out my file and says, "I'm answering your prayer." ☺ My fervent reply is: "I never asked for this! I – did – not – ask for" He will say, with His calmest authority, "Yes, you did. You asked to be made into My image." "Well, I didn't know what that meant! I take it back!" ☺ And He will gently respond, "No – it's written in blood. The question isn't whether you can take it back. It's whether you want to take the test *again* – because, you are going to be made – into My image." (Rom.8:29)

Listen! That takes all the work out of it. God says, "You're gonna pass." I agree: "Okay. Pass me through." "No," He adds, "Apparently that form of exam – that multiple choice response – wasn't so good for you. It was too hard to make the choice. You just closed your eyes and hit the middle one. ☺ So, I think I'll be more explicit this time. I'll let you know what *suffering* is all about (Phil.3:10) – to know what it means to have everyone else stand and laugh at you and point their... I think I'll let you know that one." And I can hear Jesus quietly saying: "Oh, I know that one real well. I knew that one for 33 years."

Do you ever think about this? That Jesus spent 30 years learning a trade He knew He'd never use. His Dad (Joseph, Mary's husband) was a carpenter, so it was rather automatic. He had to learn carpentry. The only thing He could build in the end would have been His own cross.

So, my Friend, you're not wasting time – "Oh, why am I taking this class? I'll never use it!" You don't know diddly what you're going to use! ☺ But God knows what you need and is going to use everything in your life – good, bad, and indifferent. He will use it all – when you give everything to Him! That's just the kind of God we serve! He uses every situation – every circumstance – every great victory and every negative. He uses *everything* in our lives. Say it out loud: "Everything in our lives is useful to God – when we surrender them to Him."

Let – Let – Let Him have His way.

Now, how do we do that? By putting off and putting on.

You see, that's what Colossians 3 is all about. First of all we "*set our affection on things above...*"(vs.2). You know what that means: Keep your eye on Jesus (Heb.12:2). That's where Jesus is – above – seated "in heavenly places" (Eph.1:20,21). "*Where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father*" (Col.3:1b). Set your affections there (Mt.6:21; Lk.12:34) – on Christ.

I love to hear men lead worship or sing with the worship team. It is wonderful music to my ears to hear the sweet things spoken through male voices – like when they say, "Beautiful Jesus! Oh, how I adore You!" I think, "Oh! That's a man saying, 'Beautiful Jesus!' Inhibitions are gone – he's not too macho to say, 'You're beautiful! You're wonderful!'" Men can say those words to their wives if they're happily having sex. But when it comes to a man speaking to God, it has to be a man who is totally committed – are you there? When he's totally committed, then he sees the beauty in the Lord – just as he does in that intercourse relationship! That's when we can sing in the spirit/Spirit – "You are my everything!" And you become one with Him!

Worship isn't just a ritual – or something we *do*. If you see it as that, you have missed the whole beautiful picture. Worship is an opportunity to make us one with Him! So completely one with Him that

words finally can't even be expressed! It's just heart to heart. His throbbing and your throbbing – and you are united in a way that cannot be articulated with words. **That's what worship should do.** You don't necessarily have to cry. You don't necessarily have to jump and dance. But you might cry and you might jump and dance. Are you there? Do you comprehend the oneness, the closeness we can each have with our God, when we come in true worship? It is a real union with Him. Intimacy.

God is looking for *sons* (children – progeny – not just gender) that will be completely one with Him so that when we leave those intimate togetherness times, we still exemplify the One we worship. It's easy to be strong when we're actually together. I could take a few on-fire teens and say, "Hey! Let's go get 'em!" We'd just walk out of here and *sock* anybody that's in the way (I'm teasing about that, of course! ☺). But in the Spirit of Christ, we would simply declare: "We are Christ's Ambassadors!" Going as a group – we're together – we feel it! We know it! And they'd know it too! I'd even wear blue jeans and put my hands in my back pockets ☺ just being a part of the group. Now, listen. *We* can go out and we do the same thing, Church, when *we* come together. Come on, tell the truth! ☺ When we come together – "Hallelujah! Bless You, Lord!" We're invincible!

Do you ever walk around your house saying that? Selah! Time to pause and consider that question! Because you should! If you don't, you turn out the light. Remember – "*Ye are the light*" And we are "*the salt of the earth.*" But we don't flavor the world if we've lost our savor (Mt.5:13). We need to remember that all the time – 24/7.

"I thought you said you were taking the work out of serving the Lord." Oh, I am. It's just a matter of *letting* Him. You see, He listens.

Let me show you something. You're the *salt of the earth*. True or false? Yes, true. Sometimes, in order to make us useful, He cuts a hunk of the salt off the rock on the hill, grinds it to powder, puts it in a shaker, puts the lid on it, and waits until He hears someone say, "Please pass the salt." I want to pause again – long enough so you can hear that. You got it, didn't you?

Then He says, "You, Penny. I want you to go over there – to Africa." "You, Jane, I want you to go with that..." "You, Shirlee, I want you ..." "You, Iverna, I want you to meet your neighbor." "I want..." "I want..." And we're in a container – that has limits (a lid) – because if He just took me as a piece of the salt off the rock and sent me out, I'd over-salt everything! "Don't you wanna know the Lord? If you don't know Jesus, you're going to hell!" ☺ That's called over-salting! ☺ It's truly a matter of – just a little bit of salt gives flavor to such boring lives. Are you there? Sometimes, a little goes a long way.

But these tests we go through – have to precede the dominion that He purposed to give to man. Nothing is more dangerous than power in the hands of a person – or in the mouth of a person – who has not passed the test!

Think of it this way – by way of illustration. There are lots of SUVs now. They're getting bigger and bigger all the time. Good Lord, I thought the tanks had come in the other day – Rrrrumm! Rrrruummm! Rrrruummm! Sitting there in my little car, I was thinking: "Oh, please don't hit me!" There are just tons of those monsters out in the neighborhoods now, let alone on the highways! And what's more – "Bubbas" are driving them! ☺ And some of those "Bubbas" are women! ☺ It just seems that their attitude is: "I have nothing to lose!" and they make a left turn from the... Just sort of "tough" attitudes. You know what I'm saying.

The same thing's true in the Church. God didn't call us to be "tough." He called us to be tender and strong. There's a vast difference – having been salted a little. I can remember times in my life when I thought, "If I had the nerve I'd kill myself." Oh yeah, it's true. I've had those times in my life. But I didn't have the nerve to do it, so I knew I wasn't as strong as I thought I was. I just wanted out! Things have not always been easy for me. Just like you, I've had some tough times. I could relate them to you in such a way that it would make you cry – because that's how I'd tell it. ☺ But let's "bottomline" it! Who

hasn't had some hard times? There isn't anyone that hasn't endured situations or that hasn't incurred some scars inwardly. We've all been hurt by others – and way too often, it's at the hand of other Christians – because the sinners don't bother us that much.

That's why the Scripture is so strong on the word, "*conquer*." Conquer means "overcome" or "have dominion." In the Greek, the word "conquerors" in Romans 8:37 is a compound word. The prefix is /huper/ and means "over." And /nikao/, the last half of the word, means "preeminently victorious" or "overcome." So, here's what it really means – this is how strong the word conquer is in the New Testament – "over overcome!" We don't "just barely" make it through! WOW! When you begin thinking that way and then you start going through the Scripture verses about conquering, like, "*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*" (1Jn.5:4) – What a statement!

Every child of God can obey Him. Can. We can defeat sin and evil pleasures – every enticement of the world – every temptation that comes from the pleasures of the world. Oh. Here's the key – by *trusting Christ* to help us.

So – what's your assignment? It really boils down to **Trust**. **The assignment that God has given the believer is "Trust Him."** When things are going great, that's an easy assignment, isn't it?

Will you listen to a poem that God used in my life, quite recently, to get me out of a pity party? Have you ever had a pity party? ☺ Be honest. Will you read this with me?

Desperately, helplessly, longingly, I cried.
Quietly, patiently, lovingly God replied.
I pled and I wept for a clue to my fate,
And the Master so gently said, "Child, you must wait."

"Wait! You say, 'Wait!'" my indignant reply.
"Lord, I need answers. I need to know why!
Is Your hand shortened or have You not heard?
By faith I have asked, claiming Your Word.

My future and all to which I can relate
Hangs in the balance and You tell me to wait?
I'm needing a "Yes" – a "Go ahead" sign
Or even a "No" to which I can resign.

And Lord, You promised that if we believe
(Don't you love to do that to Him? ☺)
We need but to ask and we shall receive.
And Lord, I've been asking and this is my cry.
I'm weary of asking and I need a reply!"

Then gently, softly I learned of my fate
As my Master replied once again: "You must wait."
So I slumped in my chair, defeated and taut,
And grumbled to God, "So, I'm waiting – for what?"

He seemed then to kneel and His eyes wept with mine
As He tenderly said, "I could give you a sign.
I could shake the heavens and darken the sun.
I could raise the dead and cause mountains to run.

All you seek I could give
and pleased you would be.
You would have what you want,
But you wouldn't know Me.

You would not know the depth of My love for each saint.
You'd not know the power I give to the faint.
You would not learn to see through the clouds of despair.
You would not learn to trust just by knowing – I'm there.

You would not know the joy of resting in Me
When darkness and silence were all you could see.
You would never experience that fullness of love
As the peace of My Spirit descends, like a dove.

You would know that I give and I save,
But you would not know that depth of the beat of my heart,
The glow of My comfort late into the night,
The faith that I give you when you walk without sight,
The depth that is beyond getting just what you asked
Of an infinite God who causes what you have to last.

You would never know should your pain quickly flee
What it means that 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'
Yes, your dreams for your loved ones overnight would come true,
But oh, the loss – if I lost what I'm doing in you.

So, be silent My Child, and in time you will see
That the greatest of gifts is to get to know Me.
And though oft My answer may seem terribly late
The wisest of answers is –
but to wait.

Someone has said that the most difficult place to be is in the Waiting Room of God.

Let's wrap this up. When I read that poem, I got off my pity party and asked God for forgiveness for my self-centered attitudes. Then I had this request for Him: "Work in me, Lord – whatever it takes (Dangerous prayer!). As long as I live and You give me breath, Beloved, keep changing me." His reply was something like this: "I will – as long as you look at Me – and trust Me. Get your eyes off of yourself – off of your pain, off of your hurts – and put your eyes on Me." *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"* (Pr. 3:5,6).

I'm not the same woman I was 10 years ago – and I thank God for His grace for that! I'm not the same woman I was 5 years ago. I'm not the same woman I was 1 year ago. Because in the interim times, I've been through some things. Tough tests. And I'm passing more often – sooner than I used to. Not so much because I'm a good person, but because I'm scared to take the course all over again. 😊 And I've learned that He takes me to the woodshed from time to time.

You just don't stand up and show off – you stand up and shine. Do you understand that? Everywhere we go – we walk into a store or we walk outside on the street – everywhere we go, things ought to change. It's like walking into a room and it's dark – so, turn on the light! Your light. Stand up, throw back your shoulders, straighten your spine, look at the ones that don't know Christ and say, "Do you want to know Him? Don't you want to know *the way*? You want a bite of this that I feast from? This is the best thing

that ever happened in my life! I'm changed!" I'm growing "from glory to glory" (2Cor.3:18). I'm in the place of conquering (Rom.8:37) – conquering myself – conquering in prayer – conquering in praise.

Paul and Silas, sitting in prison (Ac.16:23ff) – after all their dedicated ministry! Sitting there with their hands and feet fastened down in those wooden stocks. They can't move. It's dark and dank and they're prisoners held captive in a back cell. It's more like a dungeon if you read the history of it. Locked up and beaten – for preaching the Word of God!

Now, you can do one of two *wrong* things when everything goes negative for you. One is to have a pity party – "Oh, woe is me! This is not fair!" The other mistake is being proud for suffering. OR, you can choose God's way: "*lift your eyes unto the hills from whence cometh your help. My help cometh from the Lord*" (Ps.121:1).

Paul made a choice and said, "Silas, let's begin to sing." I can just hear Silas' answer him, "Are you crazy? ☺ You're crazy! We're gonna sing! Now? We're gonna sing? There's vermin in this cell and I have Charlie-horses in my back! And you want to sing!"

But I also can hear Paul starting out, singing in the Spirit. His experienced voice lifting above everything around him: "I love You, Lord. I love You, Lord and I worship and I trust Your living Word. You're beautiful, my Lord – altogether lovely...." And then Silas comes along and joins him, although I imagine his voice sort of deep and rustic and not nearly so eloquent ☺ – "I love You, Lord." They sing differently, but they both sing! ☺

Their voices meet together, wafting heavenward in praise. Now, look at it, and I'm through. The praise becomes a river. The river begins to flow upward – it goes up to the very heart of God. He looks down and says, "Look, Father. Do You see who's praising Us? Do You see who trusts Us? Let's go down and join 'em!"

And the Presence of the Lord – as a cloud of the water that's been given by the praise – begins to lower over the prison and when it gets close enough, the prison begins to shake and the doors fly open (Ac.16:26). They're singing, "I love You, Lord!" and God shows up – in power! – because **if you will praise in your lowest moment, you will send a river to heaven that will demand the rain from God!**