

The Triune God Among His People:

A Concise Survey of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit
active in the world.

(Draft Version - Expect Typos and sections requiring correction)

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BEING KNOWN BY GOD - EDITION 3

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Douglass Webb lives in Canada with his wife and child. They have been married for many years. Douglass spends his time reading and studying Reformed Baptist literature along with Reformed and Puritan literature. Douglass suffers from Functional Neurological Disorder. Functional Neurological Disorder is where the brain does not process signals properly, creating many neurological symptoms. This illness has allowed Douglass to create reflections and musings about the Bible in the Lord's will.

Reformed Baptist Reflection Website:

Website: <https://rbreflections.com/>

Reformed Baptist Reflection is a writing ministry that uses reflections and musings to understand the common faith. The 1689 Confession of Faith is the best summary available to understand the common faith for all Christians.

Please review Baptist Symbolics Volume 1 and Baptist Symbolics Volume 2 by James Renihan for a good summary of Reformed Baptist thought.

1689 Federalism is affirmed by Reformed Baptist Reflection. Please review The Mystery of Christ - His Covenant & His Kingdom by Samuel Renihan.

Dedication:

To Christians who are hungry for God's word, following the faith given once to the saints. May God encourage and send His people out with the words that save from darkness.

Romans 10:12-18 (NASB 95) 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same [Lord] is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" 16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" 17 So faith [comes] from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. 18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."

With

Acts 16:11-14 (NASB 95) 11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a [Roman] colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. 14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

Introduction

John 17:3 (NASB 95) 3 “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Greetings. All Christians have found salvation in Jesus Christ alone. No rituals, prayers, sacrifices, or joining the right group brings anyone to God. The great, infinite, pure God comes down to some humans in a poor state to remove their evil. God cleanses darkness, taking the darkness away. Humans have salvation from the dark nature, as seen in Ephesians 2:1-7 with Romans 5:14-18, that Adam passed down to his children. This is eternal life as a gift from God. What is eternal life? Eternal life is God knowing humans covered through Jesus Christ. Humans without Christ will live in a place of eternal misery and ruin. With Christ’s atoning death taking away just consequences, humans are with God forever. Salvation is God knowing His covenant people forever while being active among His people. God’s actions guide all Christians onto the same path of light, as described in the 66 books of the Bible. The path of light is the common faith, as in common teaching, for all Christians.

This book seeks to summarize the Christian life. This starts with God saving from darkness. Then, Christians need to be taught the path of light as described in the Bible. The words of the Bible are alive and active, working to accomplish God’s desire among His people. God’s strength is present to follow the teachings of the common faith for all Christians. However, the remaining effects of darkness will still trouble Christians. As temptation comes, this is the remaining effect of darkness that all Christians must battle. Temptation comes from various sources. Remember, Christ has defeated darkness already; therefore, Christians will overcome temptation. Temptation may seem to win for a time or be a struggle throughout life. Christians have hope during the struggles. As Christians respond to struggles with temptation, gaining victory over time, learning the living word of God for spiritual nourishment should be done. Why? God works through the living words of the Bible. Christians should expect to see God working in them and through them. Remember, God provides strength during the struggles with temptation and the victory over temptation. There is strength in studying the Bible daily to follow God. Christians rejoice with humility towards God when struggles come, grace as strength overcomes.

Temptation will assail and assault all true Christians, but all will overcome. The righteous one, Jesus Christ, causes all Christians to overcome as He secures all His people. Praise God for His victory applied to humans. As struggles with darkness come and go with victory, what is the mission for all Christians given by God? Christians should receive water baptism, learn the common faith with depth, and share Christ’s

forgiveness with words. No Christian is exempt. Where should Christians receive water baptism and learn? The local church takes on this role. Local churches have the responsibility to teach with depth. This book will explore the essential function of teaching. Good teaching leads Christians to receive water baptism as Christians with words share Christ's forgiveness. Humans who are born of God with in depth teaching lead pure lives away from darkness. Christians and local churches have a relationship that needs to be explored since this is God's design for His people. Why? Local Churches are essential to the Christian life. The remaining effects of darkness will come, yet local churches are there to assist God's people. God works in and through local churches.

Throughout the chapters, there are many Bible references, reflective questions, outlines, and summaries. This book is a collection of musings and reflections. The 1689 Confession of Faith explains the common teachings of the faith along with other documents. God sent teachers to teach in the past. Teachers explained the common teachings and then wrote them down. The appendixes contain more teaching from the past. Since the 1689 Confession of Faith explains what the common faith is, this book uses reflection and musings. The book will reference many Bible passages in a devotional style. It is best to take your time, Christians, to look up the references. The references will show where the ideas in the chapters come from, as the chapters will discuss ideas from the Bible. There is an assumption that the ideas are true. God communicates His ideas through the Bible alone, so it is true. Each chapter at the end has questions for further reflection. The reflective questions expand on ideas from the chapter. Reflect on the reflective questions at home, with a group of Christians, or during a book study for further spiritual nourishment coming from the Bible. The reflective questions should inspire deep reflection in the soul about God and what He reveals through the Bible alone. Take your time, Christians. The chapters will cover many subjects in some depth. It is better to learn slow receiving God's ideas.

Christians, please find comfort yet may God's word challenge you. The word of God must convince and nourish. Receive the common faith as God is clear, working in the souls of Christians for their benefit. May Christians give God all the glory and all the praise. Amen!

Chapter 1 - The God who Comforts from the Darkest Valley

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of Christ the Mediator - Chapter 8:1 - It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain [appoint] the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, in accordance with the covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man;¹ to be Prophet² [Teacher], Priest³ [Mediator], and King,⁴ the Head and Saviour of His Church,⁵ the Heir of all things,⁶ and the Judge of all the world.⁷ To the Lord Jesus He gave, from all eternity, a people to be His seed [His children]. These, in time [the dispensation of time], would be redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified by the Lord Jesus.⁸ [Redeemed = purchased from bondage by the precious blood of Christ. Called = the personal and irresistible call of the Shepherd. Justified = declared righteous and pardoned in God's sight. Sanctified = healed and changed for holiness by His power. Glorified = finally transformed and invested with perfect beauty when exalted to the glory of Heaven.]

1 Isa 42.1; 1 Pet 1.19-20. 2 Acts 3.22. 3 Heb 5.5-6. 4 Psa 2.6; Luke 1.33.

5 Eph 1.22-23. 6 Heb 1.2. 7 Acts 17.31. 8 Isa 53.10; John 17.6; Rom 8.30.

Psalm 23:4 (NASB 95) 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

With

Matthew 4:14-17 (NASB 95) 14 [This was] to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 15 "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES— 16 "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED." 17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

With

Romans 5:18-19 (NASB 95) 18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Ideas throughout the Chapter:

- 1) Christians have fears and doubts
- 2) Having darkness in the soul is the darkest valley
- 3) Christ is the conqueror of the darkest valley through covenant
- 4) Christ is with His people during concerns of life

Please read additional references: Psalms 58:3 with Romans 3 and Ephesians 2, Psalms 91:5, Psalms 138:7, John 3:36, John 10:25-33 with John 6:30-52, 2 Corinthians 3:5, Philippians 2:12-13, Revelation 5:8-9 with 1 John 1:6-7 and Romans 5:8-10.

What fear is before you, Christians? Lack of food, illness, nowhere to live, and persecution from walking with Christ are good concerns. For others, it is concerns that life brings, conflicts with friends and family, concerns for the future, and the struggle of committing a particular evil action that haunts many of God's children. Christians, who do you look at? Jesus Christ, the righteous one. The righteous one is the great God and Saviour.

Christ is the light coming over the mountain, bringing light into the darkness of evil. What about the darkest valley each person is born into? Each person is born with darkness coming from Adam. Adam represents all humans in the garden. When Adam falls into darkness from eating the fruit, not Eve, evil enters the world, turning humans from worshippers of God to haters of God. The children of Adam did not rebel against God's standard like Adam, yet darkness spread. Darkness became widespread, as the dark nature is in all humans. If no dark nature, then there is no need for Christ unless all humans are like Adam in the garden as seen in Genesis 2. No human is in the garden like Genesis 2. Please see Ephesians 2:1-7. God flooded the entire earth, wiping out humans in darkness. Noah, the Ark Builder, survived because of God's mercy. Please see Genesis 2 through Genesis 9. Adam cursed his family with darkness in the soul. All humans act under Adam's curse by committing additional dark offences towards God. The righteous one, Jesus Christ, cures the curse of Adam for some humans, removing all just consequences. Either humans will die in darkness or be alive in Jesus Christ as humans have a representative.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - The Fall of Man, Sin and Its Punishment - Chapter 6:
- 2 Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them. [We fell with them, as a race.] For from this, death came upon all:
3 all becoming dead in sin⁴ and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.⁵

3 Rom 3.23. 4 Rom 5.12, etc. 5 Tit 1.15; Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9; Rom 3.10-19.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - The Fall of Man, Sin and Its Punishment - Chapter 6:3 - 3. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead [the place] of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed [ascribed], and their corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation⁶ [birth]. Their descendants are therefore conceived in sin,⁷ and are by nature the children of wrath,⁸ the servants of sin, and the subjects of death⁹ and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.¹⁰

6 Rom 5.12-19; 1 Cor 15.21-22, 45, 49. 7 Psa 51.5; Job 14.4. 8 Eph 2.3.

9 Rom 6.20 & 5.12. 10 Heb 2.14-15; 1 Thess 1.10.

Christ is the light because He conquered the darkness. Where did Christ attack Adam's curse of darkness, appeasing God's justice, and defeating it? Look no further than the cross. The broken body of Christ with His blood poured out shows the appeasing of God's justice for His people and cleansing power away from darkness. Please see Romans 5:9 with Romans 1:18, Ephesians 2:13, and 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. Jesus Christ puts humans into a new covenant. What is a covenant? A covenant is an agreement with authoritative directions, having rewards and consequences. This definition applies to covenants between God and humans. Adam in Genesis 2 had a covenant based on his ability to keep it. Now, all humans live with the consequences of Adam's rebelling against God's covenant, leading to the need of a great saviour. The great God and Saviour Jesus Christ establishes a better covenant on God's mercy. Where Adam fails, Christ keeps God's standard. Reader, rejoice; you have a covenant of grace to rest on. Praise God for Christ sacrifice on the cross.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, pouring His blood out for darkness, was He fulfilling a mission or a task? Yes! God is one infinite pure being. Within God, there are three divine essences that do not create separation or division in God or make God into a container of essences. God is one. The three divine essences are God as God is one. Reader, later chapters will discuss who God is and God's activities in great detail. Think of a mission as a task where the divine essence wills and acts. All divine essences have a mission. The Father gives humans to Christ to cure darkness and to settle God's justice. Christ dies, washing away darkness and its consequences. The Holy Spirit applies Christ's work in creating Christians. Another type of covenant establishes an agreement among equals. This definition applies to God's essences. Reader, salvation is not a simple act of Christ dying.

Still, Christians face troubling concerns in life. Many concerns are illness, lacking food, lacking shelter, lack of medical care, and struggles with temptations. Where is God amid the concerns of life as the light of Christ seems hidden? God has not left Christians

while the concerns come. God knows Christians through their trust in Christ as Christ hung on the cross, dying and coming back to life. Christ's better covenant means God must be with His people forever. God is there assisting His people at the right time. Why? The concerns of life conform Christians to be more like God. Concerns of life purge the power of temptation while growing love for God. Christians will serve God better.

God is with His people through Christ's covenant alone, holding them with great security away from the dark valley of Adam's curse. Christ holds Christians close in His hand, never letting go as He saves many from God's justice. Feeling something does not mean God is near. Feelings change often, especially as concerns of life come. Look at God's words in John 10:25-33 with John 6. Christ will save everyone God the Father gives to Him, and nothing can remove Christians from God's hand. Look at Noah's Ark having dry land to rest on. God never forgot Noah and his family amid the flood. Look at King David's life. King Saul chased David to kill him. David's son chased him, seeking his father's throne to rule over Israel. Did David succumb to the struggle? No! Christians, God knows his people, so He will not forget you. God will help at the right time. Hold fast to what the Bible says, not a feeling making God seem near. God is near as He holds you close because of Christ's better covenant. Amen!

Questions:

- 1) Do you see Adam's curse as described in Romans 5?
- 2) Do you see the righteous one bringing life to some humans?
- 3) Do you think God is always near through covenant?
- 4) How does temptation influence you to think God is far away?
- 5) Which verse in the Bible shows you God is always near?
- 6) Do you understand that despite the concerns of life, God is transforming you?

Summary:

God sees the darkest valley each human must face. Adam introduced darkness to his children. All of Adam's children go astray into greater darkness as each rebels against God. The great God and Saviour Jesus Christ sees the greatest threat to humans. Christ completes His mission to come as a human without darkness to suffer on the cross. On

the cross, Christ conquers the greatest threat to humans establishing a better covenant. Now God welcomes some of Adam's children into the light. God's people should not look towards the feeling of God being near. Each Christian should know that God is near because of Christ's covenant as described in the Bible. John 10:25-33 explains that God keeps His people close in His hand, watching and caring for them as a shepherd. Amen!

Chapter 2 - The God that brings the most valuable Item

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 1:1 - The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.¹ [How people are saved, the nature of saving faith, and how they must live after they are saved. The word ‘sufficient’ means that Scripture contains all that we need to know. It deals with every possible issue, and therefore God does not supplement it by inspiring any other agency.] Although the light of nature [natural intelligence] and the works of creation and providence manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God so much that man is left without any excuse [for his unbelief], they are not sufficient to provide that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary for salvation.² Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners [different ways] to reveal Himself, and to declare His will to His church [His people];³ and afterward, for the better preserving and propagating of the Truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church, protecting it against the corruption of the flesh [man’s ideas will soon spoil the church] and the malice of Satan and the world, it pleased the Lord to commit His revealed Truth wholly to writing. Therefore the Holy Scriptures are most necessary [absolutely essential], those former ways by which God revealed His will unto His people having now ceased.⁴

1 2 Tim 3.15-17; Isa 8.20; Luke 16.29-31; Eph 2.20.

2 Rom 1.19-21 etc; Rom 2.14-15; Psa 19.1-3.

3 Heb 1.1. 4 Prov 22.19-21; Rom 15.4; 2 Pet 1.19-20.

Psalm 58:3 (NASB 95) 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

With

Psalm 101:4 (NASB 95) 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.

With

Matthew 7:22-24 (NASB 95) 22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

With

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB 95) 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Ideas throughout the Chapter:

- 1) Darkness in humans spreads deceptive words
- 2) God works in the dark heart to grant faith
- 3) What is the faith that God gives
- 4) The Bible is the good shepherd's voice

Please read additional references: Exodus 20, Psalms 119:115, Jeremiah 14:14, Jeremiah 27:15, Matthew 25:12, John 3:36, John 10, Romans 3, Romans 8:6-12, 1 Corinthians 2:13-15, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 5, Ephesians 2:8 with Acts 16:14, 1 Peter 1:15.

Humans in Adam seek money, fame, comfort, and riches, among other dark desires, as the most important items in life. Either Adam represents or Christ represents humans as seen in Romans 5 with 1 Corinthians 15. Humans commit many dark deeds to get these things. Darkness has no limits in all humans starting at birth. Please see Psalms 58:3 with Psalms 53:3. Mouths of non-Christians use deceptive words. Humans without the light of Christ make up ideas to replace God and His word. Instead of seeking Christ for salvation and then enjoying God's mercy forever, humans create their own salvation. How? Humans create many false religions, where each seeks false salvation through earning their own merit. In Genesis 2, Adam is under a covenant of works. Adam had to earn and keep his standing with God. The only human to earn salvation is Adam, who started with a pure but fallible state. All humans after Adam, only have darkness in them. Humans in darkness want to earn their salvation. Some pray or complete rituals, yet it is still darkness. Please see Isaiah 64:4-6. Others dismiss their criminal state that God declares in His word. By dismissing the need for salvation, humans show they are in good standing with God. God will accept them into His kingdom. To earn salvation means humans try to appease God or show themselves to be pure like Adam, yet all humans will receive God's justice. Either way, humans follow their own path as in seeking darkness through money, fame, comfort, riches, and many other dark desires to ignore God's warning of coming condemnation. Yet, there is no other hope outside of Jesus Christ, as darkness will bring great eternal ruin. There are true promises of comfort and riches found in salvation, but eternal judgment awaits humans in darkness. Run fast to Christ, who will deliver on His promises, as God cannot lie. Why?

God cannot lie, as there is no evil in Him. Please see James 1:13. When Christ declares His work on the cross secures salvation, it does. God accomplishes the greatest need for humans to obtain salvation. Are humans good enough for God will accept them? No. Can humans earn God's favour? No amount of praying, fasting, or completing actions or dismissing God's words will remove the need for salvation from darkness and God's justice. To be known by God is to trust in Jesus Christ alone. The great God and Saviour Jesus Christ welcomes nonbelievers. God grants faith and grace to His people, where they all come. Please see Acts 16:14 with Luke 24:44-47 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

Nonbelievers will trust in Christ. Trusting in and resting on Christ is faith. To trust in Christ is not a human decision, or it is a work to appease God earning salvation. Why is it a work? Humans did something outside of God granting grace and faith to earn or merit God's mercy. Yes, deciding to follow Jesus Christ is an action that appeases God in granting His mercy. No human is good in God's sight or seeks after God or can submit to God as seen in Romans 3 and Romans 8. God is acting in the nonbelievers, giving faith and grace, leading to salvation as He works in the heart. After God works in the heart, nonbelievers turn away from darkness with a change of mind. Every nonbeliever who trusts in Christ will find their darkness cleansed while Jesus Christ pardons God's justice. Christ's pardoning action is grace. God forgives, as nonbelievers have true repentance as God works in the soul. Deceptive words try to replace God's work, but will fail. Salvation is the most important thing to have.

God's salvation comes since God is merciful. Please see Romans 9. God is just, so humans cannot compel or demand salvation from Him, leaving them in their darkness. If humans may demand salvation, it is like saying I am a criminal who may tell the judge what to do. Humans are not God's advisers. Humans in darkness are at war with God, where God is the holy judge giving a proper judgement. Why? Adam's curse of giving dark desires to his children is where all humans add their own unique amounts of dark offences towards God. Please see James 4:4 with 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. The Bible describes an eternal destruction for disobeying the direction to trust in Christ awaiting all humans. Eternal destruction is not ceasing to exist, but being put in a place of eternal ruin or put in a place of a poor state, as seen in Greek. The poor state is away from God and His mercies. Humans are under God's judgement. Again, salvation comes because God is being merciful.

God becomes the shepherd for humans as humans become citizens in God's kingdom. Before salvation, humans used deception, as in false ideas and dark desires, to seek after darkness. When humans in darkness do something good like feed the poor, darkness taints. Please see Titus 1:15 with Proverbs 30:11-14. In God's sight, humans do not do good. When God transfers humans into His kingdom of light and purity, He becomes the shepherd with words of life. God leads His people through the Bible. The 66 books of

the Bible become the shepherd's voice. Reader, listen carefully to the Bible. Run fast from deceptive ideas that desire to replace God's words.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 1:6 - The whole counsel [plan and purpose] of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture, to which nothing is to be added at any time, either by new revelation of the Spirit, or by the traditions of men.⁹ ['Necessarily contained' refers to those of God's requirements which are not made in the form of direct commands. Many of these arise as the obvious and logical conclusions which are to be drawn from passages of Scripture.] Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.¹⁰ There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and church government which are common to [all] human actions [activities] and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature [common sense] and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word which are always to be observed.¹¹ [The Scripture does not always give directions for minute and obvious points of conduct or good order.]

9 2 Tim 3:15-17; Gal 1:8-9. 10 John 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12.

11 1 Cor 11:13-14; 1 Cor 14:26 & 40.

There is a question that needs to be asked. Is God finished writing His Bible and speaks through it, or is God still adding more to the Bible to speak through multiple sources? Reader, this is a question that you need to consider and be consistent with. If the Bible can guide all Christians for every good task, like 2 Timothy 3:14-17 explains, then the Bible is complete. A good task is making wise decisions leading to action, which includes everything in life. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 explains that the power of the Bible leads humans to salvation and then trains Christians for every good task. The other option is the Bible plus other sources. Other sources of God speaking will change the Bible by adding parts, changing definitions, and removing parts. A good example is, can a woman be an elder? 1 Timothy 3 says no as an elder is husband of one wife or a one woman male. When God speaks through another source like prayer, many women claim God is saying, become an elder. The other source removes the restriction of being a husband of one wife and then adds that being a spouse is all that is required. God created male and female. Please see Genesis chapters 1 and 2 to see what male and female are. Books like this affirm God speaks only through the Bible now. There is rejection of other sources of God speaking and false ideas from darkness to change the Bible. Reader, for this book to have value for you, the Bible has to be enough. The good shepherd speaks through the 66 books of the Bible alone. Listen to the wise shepherd.

Reader, God the shepherd speaks through His Bible. Spend your time listening to the pure word of God over dark thoughts rejecting the Saviour Jesus Christ. There is rest from the temptation. How?

- 1) God speaks through human language with God the Holy Spirit working.
- 2) God speaks through directions as authoritative commands.
- 3) God speaks through examples, showing what is a God honouring life and a life seeking darkness.
- 4) God speaks through explaining ideas without using specific terms.

The next chapter will explore these ideas more.

Temptation will still assail Christians. Humans in darkness following their own dark desires can lead Christians back to darkness for a time. The good news is God the shepherd speaking. God through the Bible brings corrective discipline to His sheep. Corrective discipline is God correcting desires, wants, thoughts, and actions to form them to follow His word, leading to a life that honours God. This type of discipline is not punitive, as in God expelling humans from His spiritual kingdom. God loses none of His people that He saves from darkness. Remember John 6:37 with John 10:28 and 1 Peter 1:3-5. Reader, do not confuse the two, or God lies. Receive corrective discipline since God does it out of His divine care. It may seem harsh for a time, but conforms all Christians. God provides strength during and after corrective discipline. Please see Hebrews 12:4-11 with 2 Corinthians 12:9. A life that honours God comes in part from God's corrective discipline.

God is not a lying and harsh king, expelling Christians out of His kingdom over temptation, but a caring king knowing His people need help. Salvation through Jesus Christ alone through unmerited grace secures His people from temptation. Yes, Christians look towards Christ, who secures all Christians without end. Still, God through the Bible provides corrective discipline. Deceptive ideas and words that bring temptation should not pull Christians away into darkness again. The caring shepherd, Jesus Christ, will not leave His people. The Bible is the only source where the shepherd speaks, where Christ is present. Open the Bible and read to see Christ. Reader, you have the responsibility to read and listen to the shepherd, Jesus Christ. Learn from the shepherd, Jesus Christ, following His word through authoritative direction that changes Christians. Remember, grace as strength is there to follow God. God has not abandoned His people, leaving no strength. Please see 2 Corinthians 12:9. Amen!

Questions:

- 1) What situations tempt you to embrace darkness again?
- 2) When temptation draws you away from the shepherd's voice, do you come back to the shepherd's voice asking for forgiveness and help?
- 3) Do you find rest in Jesus Christ away from temptation? If not, why?
- 4) Where has or is God the shepherd providing corrective discipline?
- 5) Where are you resisting or embracing corrective discipline knowing it is God's work?
- 6) Do you regularly open your Bible to read, explore, and learn to be transformed by God working?

Summary:

Temptation comes in many forms. Dark ideas can influence Christians back to darkness for a time, yet God the shepherd comes. How? The Bible is where Jesus Christ, the shepherd, is speaking to all His people. Jesus Christ brings the word of God to change all Christians. There is a responsibility for all Christians to read and learn the shepherd's words for their own benefit. God speaks to His people, often providing corrective discipline to assist Christians with temptation. With God's grace as strength, Christians will walk as God directs.

Chapter 3 - The God who gives Authoritative Directions

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - The Holy Scriptures - Chapter 1:4 - The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed [which commands our obedience], depends not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God its Author (Who is Truth itself). Therefore it is to be received [obeyed] because it is the Word of God.7 [In other words, when God speaks, His commands and teachings should not be questioned. We do not believe or obey because a minister proves to us that the teaching is reasonable or rewarding, but because it is God's Word. The Church of Rome claims that the church discerned, gave and guaranteed the Scripture, and that the church alone has the power to interpret. But the Scripture came first, was given by God, is self-authenticating, and rules the church.]

7 2 Pet 1.19-21; 2 Tim 3.16; 1 Thess 2.13; 1 John 5.9.

1 Corinthians 4:6 (NASB 95) 6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

with

2 Timothy 2:14-15 (NASB 95) 14 Remind [them] of these things, and solemnly charge [them] in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless [and leads] to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

With

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NASB 95) 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned [them,] 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

With

Hebrews 4:11-14 (NASB 95) 11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through [following] the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of

God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Ideas throughout the Chapter:

- 1) God is active through the Bible
- 2) The Holy Spirit uses human language to be active
- 3) Through human language, God speaks

Please read additional references: Matthew 28:16-20, John 1:1-15, John 14:15, Romans 10, 1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Titus 3:5 with Romans 10, Hebrews 4:11-13.

Where is God active in speaking to His people? The Bible is where God the Shepherd speaks. Remember, all Christians have God as their shepherd since salvation has come to some humans. Christians once were children of wrath. Adam's passing on darkness to his children leads to all humans being dead in spirit, loving darkness. No human is good according to God's standard. Yet, out of mercy without demand, God saves a people from tribes, countries, and groups. Christ takes on himself the darkness and just consequences from some humans on the cross, while giving purity and freedom from justice to some humans. Please see Revelation 5:9 with Hebrews 9:11-15. If Christ does this for every human, the blood will cleanse all humans of darkness. Please see 1 John 1:6-7 with Matthew 20:28 and John 3:15-19 and John 10:6-18 and 2 Corinthians 5:13-15 and Galatians 2:20. Notice in the verses listed above that Christ is the shepherd laying His life down for the sheep. Christ's blood cleanses darkness away. Christ's atonement on the cross does not make it possible to be saved from the darkness with a human decision, but it saves and cleanses from darkness. This is the power of God. Out of mercy, some humans are free of darkness where God becomes the shepherd to them.

There is an assumption that having salvation in Christ is enough while teaching is unhelpful. Some Christians see God's deep teaching opposed to unity as it causes strife. Other Christians want a simple faith without thinking through the Bible. Still, Christians want God to speak outside of the Bible with new revelation, dreams and visions. Reader, the point is God wrote a book for you to learn from. Learn from the Bible in depth. Salvation comes from the Bible as seen throughout Acts with 2 Timothy 3. After salvation, the Bible becomes the book where God speaks, leading all His people. God's

intent is knowable as it is examinable. Human language limits what God means through words by design. Christians should follow what God says with great care. Why? God is a king giving authoritative directions to His servants. Christians follow the authoritative directions or are not a part of God's kingdom. Is this harsh? No. To be a part of a kingdom means you learn and then follow the king's directions. Membership in God's covenant remakes humans to love the light, then follow the light. False Christians can say I love God but practice darkness as in violating God's authoritative direction. The God's light is not in this person. To be clear, Christ saves and secures humans.

Obedience to God's word shows a living faith. Please see James 2 with 1 John. All Christians will struggle. Remember, grace is sufficient to get Christians through this life. There is a difference between a false convert who practises dark desires covered in light compared to a true convert who struggles yet submits then follows God's direction.

God in His mercy goes beyond giving hell insurance. Hell insurance is the Lord Jesus Christ saves from darkness, and that is it. There are no authoritative directions for life. Some humans will come to salvation before physical death, which Christians should praise God for His mercy. The person being referenced here is someone who wants salvation but does not want the most holy and pure king to rule over them. This person still wants dark practises or a dark way of life. Hell insurance is not enough besides coming to Christ before physical death. Why? God, through the written words of the Bible, gives all Christians a mission as explained in Matthew 28:16-20 with Acts. Humans should receive God's mercy through resting on Christ for salvation, then receive water baptism and then learn God's word in the local church. After Christians learn and gain some spiritual maturity, they go out to share Christ's in salvation with words. While sharing Christ's free mercy with words humbly and graciously, Christians should serve in the local church as God directs. The local church is where Christians do spiritual activities together. Later chapters will refine this definition. God explains His mission through authoritative directions in human language for all Christians. The Bible guides every thought and action. Please see 2 Timothy 3:12-17.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - The Holy Scriptures - Chapter 1:5 - We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the people of God to gain a high and reverent estimation of the Holy Scriptures. We may be similarly affected by the nature of the Scriptures – the heavenliness of the contents, the efficacy of the doctrine [the effectiveness and power of the teaching], the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts [the perfect agreement of all the parts, devoid of contradiction], the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God [unique in literature], the full disclosure it makes of the only way of man's salvation, together with many other incomparable excellencies and entire perfections. By all this evidence the Scripture more than proves itself to be the Word of God. Yet, notwithstanding this, our full persuasion and assurance

of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.⁸

8 John 16.13-14; 1 Cor 2.10-12; 1 John 2.20 & 27.

God wrote His thoughts to humans lost in darkness. Humans who are good from birth by God's standard do not need the Bible. Anyone receiving Adam's dark nature and then adding their own rebellious acts needs the Saviour Jesus Christ through understanding God's word. Using words with defined meanings transmits ideas. There is great insight in understanding the languages of Hebrew and Greek, which God wrote the Bible in. Excellent translations capture the meaning of Hebrew and Greek into another language like English. Words reveal the author's intent to an audience. The Bible is examinable because of how words communicate ideas. Reader, if you read a Bible in a language you know well, you can examine and explore God's thoughts. Remember Jude 1:3 as you explore God's thought. Why? The faith, as in its teaching, is for every Christian. Reader, God's teaching is not about what you believe with verses and arguments why for your position. The Greek word for faith in Jude 1:3 means the teachings of God. God gave His teaching once to His people. The examinable Word of God is to unify Christians under Christ's rule. As the Bible transmits ideas, it reveals God's intent.

Readers, let's go deeper with language transmitting ideas.

1) The Holy Spirit is active along with the Bible: God wrote His divine words in the Bible, leading to salvation and more. Is reading the Bible enough to understand God's thoughts? No, being in Adam leads to blindness. Darkness blinds spiritual thoughts throughout the Bible. Non-believers understand facts about the Bible or events from history the Bible addresses but see no need in themselves for Jesus Christ saving from darkness. This explains why many hear the Bible with its message of hope and then reject its message of hope. Non-believers see the Bible as foolish. Unless the Holy Spirit washes away darkness to reveal spiritual thoughts, all humans will miss the Bible's point of needing salvation. Please see 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 with Titus 3:5-7. As the Holy Spirit works in Christians, the Bible's spiritual thoughts come alive and become known. Are Christians required to read the Bible and listen to the Bible being read? Yes. Christians should read it, study it, reflect on it, and then put the Bible into action. Local churches need to teach the Bible well with deep teaching, so that Christians will know the common faith that God gives. Yes, God will not through the Holy Spirit reveal everything in the Bible reading at home to nullify the need of the local church. 1 Timothy 4:13 with Acts 20:7-11 commands male elders to read the Bible out loud and then teach Christians. Male elders leading local churches can teach the Bible better and in more detail than the average Christian. This is their gift from God. There is no pattern

to reading the Bible at home to know God's thoughts without the local church. God speaks through human language as the Holy Spirit teaches while connected to the local church.

2) Directions as authoritative commands: God is the heavenly King. Kings from the earth command their servants, expecting obedience. God gives grace to save, then that grace becomes strength to follow in what He commands. Since grace is enough to save and to strengthen, God expects His children to follow what He commands through a covenant. Where are God's commandments? The Bible is this place. There is no reason, as seen in point one, for Christians to be confused about what each should do. God provides positive commands and negative commands, like tell the truth and do not lie. Remember, do not confuse a living faith that obeys God's word with salvation. Christ saves alone, not obedience in following the Bible. If Christians have confusion about what each should do, it is a lack of salvation or a lack of training in God's commands. When salvation is absent, ask for God's mercy to wash the darkness away. Lack of training from the Bible is more difficult to address. There are many reasons Christians will lack instruction. Later chapters will discuss at least some of these reasons. For now, carefully read the Bible to know what God's commands are.

3) Directions through positive and negative examples: The Bible provides many commands, such as tell the truth and do not lie. Commands are positive and negative. Is there another way that God directs His people? Yes, through example. A command is a direction with the expectation of being followed through a covenant. An example is when God explains something without giving a command. Proverbs is a book of examples. There is a parallel between how a godly person lives and how a godless person lives through comparison. Throughout the Bible, God consistently compares how His children live in a covenant through salvation and how rebelling humans live without salvation. Humans in rebellion against God can do some parts of a covenant, but it is still rebellion. Remember, Christ has to cleanse humans for anything to be good. Examples can be positive or negative. A good comparison is there is one true God to worship, which is the positive example. The negative example is humans creating false gods to worship from darkness or worshipping Satan and demons. This can be worshipping God in ways God never revealed, like my personal worship style. Yes, many humans make up ideas that God never said to do. The Bible speaks of many gods, but there is only one with directions in how to worship. Reader, look for examples throughout the Bible and learn. There is a difference between light and darkness as seen through example. Learn from negative examples to learn what darkness is. The example of light points to living faith resting on Jesus Christ alone.

4) God expressing Himself in His unique way: God is the only heavenly king who

expresses thoughts in the way He pleases. What does this mean? God wrote the Bible through humans writing divine words. Yes, God gave divine words to humans to write, not humans writing and then God making human words His divine word. This is important because God expresses Himself uniquely. Christians want specific terms to be in passages or ideas expressed in a certain way for a teaching to be true. Yes, the servant of the king is demanding the king express Himself this way or I will not affirm this teaching as true. Reader, if this is your attitude, turn away from it. All Christians serve God by carefully following how God expresses Himself. Why? Take Genesis 2 when God provides one command to Adam of do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God does not use the word covenant in this passage, but a covenant exists since God made an authoritative agreement with Adam. Many Christians at this point demand the word covenant needs to be there, or there is no covenant. The denying of a covenant leads to other problems. Without a covenant, there is no violation of a command. Since there is no violation of a command, why did the world fall into darkness? If there is no darkness coming from Adam, why is the earth cursed and there are curses on humans? This thought should continue in changing Christ and salvation offered to humans. God expresses himself without using specific terms that Christians demand must be there. Reader, receive the Bible as it is. Learn to understand how God expresses Himself to know teaching as a humble servant.

Language communicates ideas. God uses the complexities of language to reveal Himself. Bible references as in like 1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 Timothy 2:14-15, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, and Hebrews 4:11-14 are at the beginning of this chapter. Reader, you are to follow the words of the Bible, study the Bible and receive spiritual thoughts from the Bible while the Bible completes its work. When Christians don't think the Bible is sufficient for every thought, action, and word, these Christians cannot see the Bible as God sees it. Christians cannot see the power in the Bible. These Christians turn to something else. Some Christians want to be entertained by a leader every week. Other Christians want more words from God in dreams and visions. Still, many Christians live a simple life that is separated from the surrounding darkness, but will not dive deeply into God's spiritual thoughts. It is not surprising that Christians forget the Bible than do not read the Bible. Reader, God has given you the ability to read and understand the Bible, but through God's way. Follow God's way and learn His thoughts.

Reader, let's work through difficult passages by following their meaning and putting complex ideas together.

1 John 1:6-7 (NASB 95) 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and [yet] walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His

Son cleanses us from all sin.

This passage explains that Christ's blood cleanses Christians from darkness. Christ is the only sacrifice that cleanses darkness, as explained in Hebrews. The blood of Christ does not make it possible to be saved from darkness, but it saves from darkness.

In John 10:6-18, Jesus explains that He lays His life down for the sheep. God's sheep are Jew and non-Jew brought together into God's kingdom as one where Christ's blood cleanses these humans. God has identified His people who will come and have freedom from Adam's dark nature passed on and rebellious actions. Why does this matter? God has explained what cleanses and who it is for.

1 John 2:1-2 (NASB 95) 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for [those of] the whole world.

The passage above creates issues. Why? Verse 2 says Jesus Christ takes the darkness of every person to clear God's sentence of guilty of rebellion from darkness. Christ takes the darkness, and its consequences onto Himself to give life. If this is true, God's justice has appeasement, and everyone will go to heaven. Why would God reject humans whom Christ has cleansed? Remember, verse 2 says Christ's propitiates Christians that Apostle John writes to and then the whole world. Reader, do you see a problem with this verse when compared with 1 John 1:7 and John 10:6-18? One verse says Christ lays His life down for the sheep, yet another verse says Christ lays His life down for every human. With sadness, this is how Christians read the Bible. There must be a better way.

What is the better way? Revelation 5:9 defines the whole world.

Revelation 5:9 (NASB 95) 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Out of the whole world, God will save His sheep. The whole world is changed through more specific passages. Another passage that changes the whole world is Matthew 20:28. Christ with His life buys some humans back from the slavery of darkness. God expresses Himself from specific ideas to vague ideas. Verses like Matthew 20:28 and John 10:6-18 are specific verses. 1 John 2:1-2 is a vague passage. If 1 John 2:1-2 is true, and it takes care of all human darkness, passages concerning hell lose their meaning. No human is going to hell. To learn the Bible becomes pointless as Christ covers all

darkness and its consequences. Live anyway you want, since Jesus Christ saves me from darkness. Passages like Romans 6:1 with 2 Corinthians 5:13-17 go on explaining grace is there for holy living since Christ's atoning act leads humans to purity.

2 Corinthians 5:13-17 (NASB 95) 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him in this way] no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, [he is] a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Christ's work on the cross pays for darkness and its consequences. All those Christ's dies for die to darkness and are reborn into the kingdom of light when salvation comes through Christians explaining Christ's message through words. If all means every human, then all humans have salvation, leading to a pure life. This is clearly not the case. The non-believing world exists while conflicting with God's people. Most humans, from observation from many Christians over centuries, will never rest on Jesus Christ for salvation. Passages like Matthew 25:14-46 explains humans will enter eternal consequences, as in hell without end. Reader, do you notice what this chapter is doing? It explains how to approach God and His words. This chapter has attempted to explain how to receive God's word. The clearest passages explain vague passages, but not at the expense of ignoring the Bible to fit a preferred position. The opposite is true where the Bible fits well together. Reader, your responsibility is to explore God's spiritual thoughts. Receive God's thought in how He explains them.

These four points mentioned above, are a starting place to know the common faith. Common faith is the common teachings of the faith. Reader, when you learn a teaching from the Bible, it is not for your own belief. A Christian belief does not prove or disprove teaching. When Christians make the Bible's teaching about their own belief, the belief of the Bible becomes the standard. The opinions of Christians filter God's thoughts. God's thoughts are not only for one Christian, but for all of God's people throughout history to learn there caring God. Yes, all Christians should have positive convictions that guide thoughts, speech, and actions. God's thought is the same for all Christians. The Bible is to be understood as a book to guide all Christians. This means Christians should hold the same thoughts of God since God's thoughts do not change from Christian to Christian. Again, Christians should have the same positive convictions as the Bible is examinable to test teachings. The Jews at Berea examined the Apostle Paul's preaching. To examine a teaching is to follow the points above and other points in

later chapters. Reader, your aim is to follow God's intent. To know God's thoughts is to know God's intent. Language reveals thoughts, leading to intent. Reader, either you can make understanding the Bible too complex with many rules that often hide the meaning of the passage with endless debate does a passage really mean this. The simple way is to receive the Bible as is, following what God wants you to receive. Follow the Bible references for insight into how to understand God's intent.

Before concluding this chapter, beware of arguments or any person who questions the meaning of any passage to create new teaching. There is a difference between Christians seeking understanding of passages compared to someone inserting a new meaning into passages. When someone is learning the Bible, it takes time for guidance and good teaching to make themselves known. Be patient with young Christians. To mature in God's ways, it takes time. Many who want to insert new ideas that Christians have never known use various methods. God has left a guide in the Bible to know what the Bible means. It is easier to follow God's guide. God's guide makes His teaching examinable with a definable meaning. No need for feelings or mystical insight. Reader, look deeply at your Bible with care. Remember, the Holy Spirit is active through the written word of God.

Reader, do not go beyond the words of the Bible. Embrace the Bible. Why? Humans lack the ability to know God's thoughts and intent outside of Jesus Christ. The Bible with the Holy Spirit reveals God and who He is and what He expects from all humans, especially Christians. God answers the most important question in life: what should any human do to resolve their darkness, starting at birth? The Lord Jesus Christ will save some from darkness through the examinable Bible. God explains what He expects from His servants as God gives authoritative directives. God through the Bible continues speaking to guide Christians throughout life as God the Holy Spirit does His work. Reader, read your Bible with care. Amen!

Questions:

- 1) How do you see the Bible?
- 2) Is the Bible a book of suggestions, or does it contain authoritative directions from the king to the servant?
- 3) As a human washed of darkness, do you see yourself as a servant required to follow your king's commands?
- 4) Are you reading the Bible carefully to know God's authoritative directions?

- 5) Where do you struggle in knowing how to read the Bible well?
- 6) How do the verses throughout this chapter encourage to be diligent in studying the Bible?

Summary:

God is active throughout the Bible. What does God do? God, the Holy Spirit, reveals spiritual thoughts to reveal God's intent. Human language with the Holy Spirit completes this mission to communicate to all Christians what God directs with authority. Yes, Christian should read and study the Bible since God will reveal His intent that is examinable and definable. God's thoughts are knowable. The Christian goal is to know their God through the Bible since God designed it this way.

Chapter 4: God's Guide to know His Teaching

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 1:6 - The whole counsel [plan and purpose] of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture, to which nothing is to be added at any time, either by new revelation of the Spirit, or by the traditions of men.9 ['Necessarily contained' refers to those of God's requirements which are not made in the form of direct commands. Many of these arise as the obvious and logical conclusions which are to be drawn from passages of Scripture.] Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.10 There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and church government which are common to [all] human actions [activities] and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature [common sense] and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word which are always to be observed.11 [The Scripture does not always give directions for minute and obvious points of conduct or good order.]

9 2 Tim 3.15-17; Gal 1.8-9. 10 John 6.45; 1 Cor 2.9-12.
11 1 Cor 11.13-14; 1 Cor 14.26 & 40.

Acts 17:10-12 (NASB 95) 10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily [to see] whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

With

1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NASB 95) 14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15 but in case I am delayed, [I write] so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

With

1 Timothy 6:3-5 (NASB 95) 3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4 he is conceited [and] understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

With

Jude 1:3 (NASB 95) 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Ideas throughout the Chapter:

- 1) God speaks through His word
- 2) How God speaks through His Word
- 3) Creeds and Confessions are guards against error

Please read additional references: Joshua 1:1-9, Psalms 1:1-3, Psalms 25:5, Psalms 119:44-48, Ezra 7:10, Nehemiah 8:1-8, 1 Timothy 1:3-5, 2 Timothy 2:14, 2 Timothy 2:23, and Titus 3:8-11.

The previous chapter introduced the idea that God is active through His Word. Christians should follow human language while the Holy Spirit is active, God gives authoritative directions, God uses examples that are positive or negative, and God expresses Himself in how He wants. This is a good start. God speaks to His people through a written book. Yes, God by design limits what He means by definable and examinable words. This may seem to be a negative. It is not. By having the Bible as a definable and examinable book, the Bible is clear. There should not be any confusion since God makes His word plain. This chapter will expand on the idea of having a clear and plain text from God.

Before beginning this chapter, the last chapter mentioned there is always an argument. Arguments can communicate truth or lies. To argue is not the issue, but what the argument says is the issue. This book contains arguments, and the Bible will judge them to test their content.

- 1) Humans in darkness will come up with arguments that will seem convincing. For what goal? To change or nullify God's word, thinking they are right and Christians are wrong. The argument will have some truth and some lies mixed. Christians need to dismiss such arguments and conclusions while being respectful. Remember, darkness taints the minds of humans in darkness, so darkness will affect any conclusion without the person knowing it. The only response is explaining the Gospel with patience. While explaining the Gospel with words, avoid needless arguments.
- 2) Humans who follow strange feelings and mystical sources will come with arguments. Often, they will claim the Holy Spirit says this or gave me this impression. This includes a person's conscience. A conscience can become what determines what is true, making it a mystical source. The Bible becomes a door into hidden knowledge along with other sources. Humans will adjust the Bible's message to follow other sources of spiritual truth. This person may be a Christian who is confused. The problem is that the person cannot define and examine a source of truth, regardless of whether they are a Christian or a nonbeliever. Remember the verses from the previous chapter. God's thought leading to His intent is definable and examinable. These Christians need to be encouraged to accept that God wrote a book through prophets and apostles where God's intent is knowable. This takes time. Male elders will need to encourage but warn not to bring this mystical truth into this local church. If these Christians accept God's way, great. When Christians rather follow mystical sources of truth along with the Bible, their arguments and statements have to be treated as error. Local churches should protect themselves while waiting to see if these people lack salvation, need more teaching, or are false teachers.
- 3) False teachers will come, teaching ideas not in the Bible. Yes, false teachers will quote the Bible. Therefore, quoting the Bible is not enough. There will be clever arguments that will fool Christians for a time until Christians humbly learn God's intent again. The best way to detect false teaching is knowing good teaching to avoid spiritual injury. Yes, focus on God's intent. To learn God's intent with guards is to study the Bible well with confessions and creeds. Confessions and creeds protect against false teaching. More on this later.
- 4) Christians with good intent come with an argument. This situation is tough to handle since they are God's sheep but confused. They will seem full of God and have insight into the Bible. But they have an argument denying the truth. Male elders need to be patient in listening and then teach, but prevent useless arguments ruining the Christians they watch over.

The best way to have protection from false arguments that change God's intent is to know God's intent with guards in place. The Bible is always the ultimate authority for judging everything. Confessions and creeds are guards that the Bible judges. All tools used to understand the Bible submit to the Bible. Nothing replaces God's word. As good as guards or tools may be, they are not God's written word.

Before covering subjects from God's divine word, what is the goal of learning to study the Bible? To know the Great Commission. Matthew 28:16-20 explains what the Great Commission is. Humans in darkness need to rest on Christ's mercy from darkness as Christians witness with words. After trusting in Christ, water baptism follows. The local church is where water baptism occurs. After water baptism, new Christians need to be taught in the local church. Once new Christians learn from the Bible, they should go spread Christ's mercies with words like Christians did for them. Christians should be a part of the local church. The local church needs to teach in depth. To be taught the Bible is a lifelong journey of God purifying His people from the remaining effects of darkness. As the Bible reveals darkness and what God commands, all Christians walk on the path of the common faith.

One chapter is not enough to cover various aspects of how to understand the Bible. A book is required. Still, one chapter will start the journey to understand the large ideas that God provides. The last chapter mentioned that following a language with the Holy Spirit revealing God's intent is required to understand the Bible. The Bible is its own divine guide to understanding itself. How? In God's expressing Himself, He provides a divine guide. Reader, be sensitive and follow God's divine guide. Aim for God's intent to learn from God, to know what it means to love God, and to know how to live with wisdom and purity.

Point 1: Do not go beyond what is written and follow the purpose of what is written

The Bible is there for Christians. What about the Holy Spirit? Yes, the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual thoughts of God. This does not mean Christian should avoid careful study of the Bible, thinking the Holy Spirit will provide the meaning of the Bible. The Holy Spirit gets abused by many as some think He will provide meaning absent of following language. God wrote His book in human language where it is examinable and definable. All languages have a set of defined words that other humans can examine. If not, reader, you cannot read this and object. Since the Bible is in English like this book, God's people can examine and define its meaning. God included His intent in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. Another part of language is the ability to translate ideas from one language into another language. Excellent translations

capture the meaning of God's intent to deliver God's spiritual truths. God built this into His Bible. The Holy Spirit follows the meaning of the written text He wrote. To be clear, the Holy Spirit cannot override what He wrote and means. How do Christians know this? The Apostle Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 4:6 not to exceed what God wrote. God tells Christians not to exceed the written word. In fact, God goes further in 1 Timothy 2:15. Faithful Christians seek God in part through the careful study of God's word. What does the Holy Spirit do then? Reveals spiritual thoughts contained within the Bible. Without the Holy Spirit revealing spiritual thoughts leading to God's intent, no human will have access to knowing God and then following God.

Many at this point object to claiming that ideas through language are unknowable. Yes, there is a distrust of language communicating ideas. If language cannot communicate ideas, there is no objection as these strange symbols are not knowable. Someone like this has more important problems, like how to figure out what to eat. The food might come with a warning like poison, do not eat, but the person cannot understand the idea. How much for the unknown box of food or poison? Or how is this person going to find places for food without language communicating the idea of where to go? Day-to-day tasks become impossible without language. This should seem to be silly. Many people do this with the Bible. Remember back in Genesis 3 where Satan tempted Eve. The question that Satan asked is did God really say? This questions God's thought and intent. Many question the Bible with, does the passage mean this or that? Christians who have fallen into this distrust of language only have an opinion of God and His divine teaching. Yes, there is only an opinion about the Bible, which may contain God's thoughts and intent. This is a faith that is unstable. These Christians need to become trusting of language and seek God's intent through knowable words. This leads to a stable faith.

Before concluding this point, what are the issues when ideas are unclear? Someone who communicates in a poor way is at fault when an audience does not understand. What is the issue? Failure to use language well to communicate to an audience. Someone who cannot understand an idea with clarity from reading or listening is at fault. What is the issue? Failure to understand language prevents the gaining of clear ideas. Language is not at fault with the speaker or listener does not follow the proper usage to communicate well. Reader, be careful in how you communicate and be careful in how you listen.

In Ezra 7:10, God's word is read to the people, where the people hear God's thoughts. Receive God's word with language and the Holy Spirit working together.

Point 2: Handle God's word well even with difficult passages

In 2 Peter 3:14-16, the Apostle Peter explains that the Bible is difficult to understand.

Reader, this should lead you to humility. Why? When difficult passages will come, it is not a surprise, as the Apostle Peter says so. Many at this point distort the Bible to their own destruction and lead others into their error. It takes humility to receive God's message. Some Christians may despise parts of the Bible where there are commands to be loving with grace as strength. For other Christians, learning what God does to save humans in darkness from His justice causes struggles. Then there are other Christians who struggle with receiving a faith as there are parts that make little sense to them. The point is there are many reasons the Bible is difficult to receive and understand. Christians need to identify where the struggles are and then turn away as in repentance away from the struggles. Reader, humility comes from repenting of darkness that leads to struggles. There should be greater trust in God after repentance, receiving God's word as it is. Besides struggling with reading a language, there is no reason to let struggles rule. Again, repentance leads to humility. God still expects His people to handle the Bible with great care.

Point 3: The Structure of God's divine words

Is there an internal structure in the Bible? The book of Hebrews in chapters 8 through 10 explains that there are two covenants. The Bible testifies of various covenants, so they are different covenants. There is not a single covenant reflecting itself in various ways. How is this known? Throughout Chapter 8 of Hebrews, it speaks about a covenant being at fault, unable to save from darkness, requiring a better covenant based on Christ's better work. Exodus to Christ's death on the cross is the first covenant. The first covenant requires humans to keep a set of laws, which humans in darkness cannot. Yes, this is why God grants faith leading to salvation. This foreshadows what humans need in a covenant that Jesus Christ performs. Jesus Christ creates a better covenant based on His ability to keep God's standard. The cross creates Christ's covenant. The second covenant is from Christ's cross to Revelation without end. Jesus Christ applies His perfect law keeping to His people. Salvation brings Jesus Christ's perfect law keeping of God's standard to humans in darkness.

Before continuing, it is necessary to explain two terms. Reader, remember grace is strength. God's strength makes humans follow His commands. Positive law is God authorizing a command for a specific covenant for His people to follow. When a covenant ends, the commands are no longer in force. God's people are not to follow them as that agreement has ended. There is another category called moral law. It is a moral standard that is above any covenant. The Ten Commandments, as seen in Exodus 20, are a good example of a moral standard above any covenant that repeats throughout God's word. The Bible has a coherence standard. God's moral standard remains the same, but takes on different forms with different consequences. God repeats His moral

standard outside the first covenant in the second covenant, like having a day of rest and worship. Both the first and the second covenants have a day of rest and worship. Yet the details are different in the same principle. Reader, look for repeating commands from various covenants to determine moral law. When the covenant ends and the command does not repeat, that shows a positive law. Please see Hebrews 9 for further information. Look for a balance between large ideas that are above covenants and ideas that end with covenants ending. Christians should be careful with these ideas. Again, Christ provides grace as strength.

Hebrews 9:13-15 (NASB 95) 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were [committed] under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

In Hebrews 9:15, God reveals an important part of how He structured the Bible. God required animals to be sacrificed to cleanse darkness away during the first covenant. The first covenant cannot save from darkness. Animals cannot save, but only Christ can. The first shadows something better while providing humans a way to interact with God. God did not leave these people in the first covenant without hope, as Christ's death and resurrection saves some too. Salvation applies even further. Did God save Abraham, who trusted in God's mercy for his salvation? Yes, as seen in Romans 4, God saves all of His people from Genesis to Revelation because of Jesus Christ alone. This shows there are other ideas outside of moral law not limited to a covenant. The Bible's structure has many ideas outside of covenants.

There are other covenants God made with humans. God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and David. All these covenants point humans to the need of Christ. Some covenants lead to judgment where humans need Jesus Christ for salvation. Other covenants point to what salvation is, as in resting in Jesus Christ for salvation, who is the eternal king sitting on an eternal throne. God uses various covenants for His own purposes.

God's structure in the Bible helps in understanding the Bible better. How? God provides a guide to understanding His word through covenants that point to large subjects. The Bible has commands that end with covenants that Christians are not to follow. Commands that continue from ended covenants are to be followed by Christians forever.

While commands end and continue, covenants point to larger ideas. Some covenants point to human darkness. The inability of the first covenant to save becomes clear as animal sacrifices cannot save. Without God's saving grace, all humans are under God's justice. The other covenants point to hope. There is the great King Jesus Christ coming, establishing salvation of grace and mercy through His own life, death, and resurrection. Yes, a perfect ruler dying for His people. Throughout the Bible, covenant points and establishes the story of Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus Christ is what Christians should read from the whole Bible. Jesus Christ is the eternal king, becoming the central theme of the Bible. Reader, receive this coherent message of the Bible.

Point 4: Christ is the central theme of the Bible

Christ is the central theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation through various ideas. Please see John 3:37-47. The Bible will present various ideas like darkness entering the world, the nation rebelling against God, spiritual gifts, fruit of the Spirit, and other subjects that do not appear to be about Christ. These subjects and more reflect Christ, who points to the other two essences in God. Remember, God is one, with no division or parts. Yet God has three distinct essences as in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the one being of God. Christians should see all of God when they read about Jesus Christ in the Bible. Many parts of the Bible are about other subjects. Not every verse is about Jesus Christ, but the overall theme is about Christ. Like developing insight into cleaning well or a skill for work, finding Christ throughout the Bible takes time. Take Psalms 8 as it is about Jesus Christ. How? It speaks about Jesus Christ coming as a human, silencing His enemies and conquering darkness. The Psalm does not use the word Christ or say how Christ silences His enemies. Books like Matthew or Luke explain God comes into the world as a baby, yet murderers come for His life. Jesus Christ silences His enemies by escaping to Egypt. Darkness lost on the cross, and Christ went back to His heavenly place. Everything is now under Christ's authority, including the animals on earth. Therefore, Jesus Christ in Luke 24:44 explains that the Psalms, along with books from Moses and the Prophets, are about me. The Apostle Paul in Acts 28:23-24 restates that the Bible is about Jesus Christ. From Christ's cross to Revelation is about Jesus Christ, forming the New Testament. The New Testament is the second covenant from above and Christ's new covenant spoken about in chapter 1. This new covenant of grace is about Jesus Christ and the church.

Start here:

Point 5: God's divine teaching through the Prophets and Apostle for all time

Below is a summarize the last four points.

- 1) Follow the written Bible through language to know God's intent.
- 2) The Bible contains hard passages requiring Christians to receive the Bible with humility.
- 3) God's covenants provide internal structure to the Bible, pointing to Jesus Christ.
- 4) Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Bible.

Why do these points matter when put together? The prophets of the first covenant and the apostles of the second covenant wrote the Bible as God breathed out His words. The Bible contains God's words, which He wrote through human hands. Why is this important? The Bible alone contains the Christian faith, as Christians can examine and define its teachings. Jude 1:3 adds an important element that needs to be considered. Is the Christian faith written in a way where individual Christians determine its meaning, or is the Christian faith written to all Christians at all times with a defined meaning? This simple question has long-reaching consequences. Greek needs to be appealed to here. What does faith mean in Jude 1:3? Many readers will assume what I believe or what I am convinced of. It is the opposite. The Greek word for faith in this context means Christian teaching or God's doctrine. To put this definition back into the overall passage shows that God gave the Christian teaching to all Christians once. The question is, how do Christians read the Bible now? Any teaching from God becomes true for all Christians, where all Christians receive the faith written by God.

Are there any passages that direct Christians to receive tradition is a positive way? Yes. The Apostle Paul warns in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 to follow the tradition as in teaching given by God and to avoid individuals who distort God's teaching. Tradition is teaching, which can be good teaching received from the Bible or bad teaching that distorts the Bible. No Christian should be afraid of receiving good teaching or good tradition that comes from the Bible. Christians should avoid at all costs bad tradition or bad teaching when possible as it has the power to mislead Christians. The Apostle Peter continues this thought. In 2 Peter 1:1, the Apostle Peter speaks of receiving the same faith or the same teaching from Jesus Christ. The apostles and others have received the same faith. It is not my belief then what others believe. This settles the battle of my opinion versus another person's opinion. Why? God's teaching is the same teaching to all Christians, which is received. When there is a disagreement, read verse by verse with passages dealing with the subject in question to conform to the received faith.

To end this point, remember 2 Peter 1:19-21. No understanding of the Bible comes from the Christian's own opinion but by the Holy Spirit providing God's intent. Where is God's intent? It is in the language of the Bible, where is examinable and definable. The

Bible is not what I believe but what God means as received in the Bible.

Point 6: Safe Guard of Creeds and Confessions

This last point carries over from point 5. There is not enough space to properly explain this last point, conclusions will be provided and discussed.

Throughout history, Christians have received the faith from the Bible. Teachers would teach the received faith in the local church. Christians would learn like in Acts 2. Error would come that misleads or error that leads to God's justice in hell. Every generation of Christians has had to deal with error in some form. The Bible has remained the same, leading Christians down the same path with distractions from error. As the distractions have come, Christians have had to respond. Or error would lead Christians astray. The good news is that God has had local churches with teachers explaining and defending the common faith, leading to responses to error. God has not left his people defenceless. The common faith is the same as good tradition or good teaching or a received faith. Teachers wrote their defences against error. This book's introduction refers to the 1689 Confession of Faith. This is one good example of teachers defending the truth while teaching what is good. The 1689 Confession of Faith incorporates many defences.

Reader, learn from the defences given by God. Teachers repeat God's intent as they teach. This requires being humble realizing Christians in many generations have been studying the Bible and following the common faith. Local churches, being the pillar of the truth, have defended the good tradition for many generations. Please see 1 Timothy 3:14-16. Is there a good example in the Bible where teachers defended the truth, then Christians received? Yes, in Acts 15. The first Christians dealt with error where some were trying to make positive law from the first covenant an obligation in the second covenant. Male elders came together to hear the issues and gave a judgment for the local churches to follow. There is no space to work through all the details or concerns this brings up. Local church elders as teachers made a ruling for the churches to deal with the error. Christians today can receive documents that teach and defend the common faith. This means the Bible is still the judge. The Bible still provides guidance to test everything. There is nothing that is superior to the Bible in matters of God's intent for humans. God provides this precedent.

Christians should follow this practice of receiving the faith as in Acts. This means studying the Bible with guards in place to avoid error. Guards will protect against error while promoting the truth of the common faith. Confessions are written statements providing a positive presentation of the common faith from God with Bible references for further study. These are normally concise statements covering most to all subjects in

the Bible. Christians should study the Bible references. Why? To understand God's intent from His book, to find comfort while knowing truth from error. Catechisms ask a question and then answer the question while providing Bible references to be studied to understand the answer. These can range from a few questions to many questions covering many subjects that build on each other. Christians should memorize the answer with Bible references. Why? To know the common faith and to be ready to answer error. The authority of confessions and catechisms comes from the Bible alone. God through His Bible gives authority. This is where God has provided the teaching of the common faith from many teachers while giving defences from error. It would be foolish to ignore this gift. Many Christians who are arrogant and prideful see no need for this gift. The reasons are many. Often, these Christians go their own way to change the Bible to agree with themselves. There is a claim of, I believe this or God told me. These ideas and more have had correction from the Bible. God gives positive convictions to all His people. The Bible, containing God's intent, speaks the same faith to all Christians. Yes, Christians should have positive convictions. The question is, will Christians be humble enough and conform to God's teachings? Reader, will you conform to God's traditions as in studying the Bible and reading good summarizes of the faith?

To conclude, to read to understand the Bible well requires learning spiritual and intellectual skills mentioned in the last chapter and this chapter. This subject requires a book to address additional points. Still, this is a good start. Learn and follow how God treats and uses His word.

Questions:

- 1) How do you approach the Bible?
- 2) Do you see value in language?
- 3) Do you see how God communicates through language?
- 4) How do arguments affect you?
- 5) How do you struggle with studying the Bible to follow God's intent?
- 6) How do you struggle with the doubt wondering, does God mean this or that?
- 7) Where do you struggle with difficult passages?
- 8) How do you deal with difficult passages?

- 9) Do God's covenants point you to Jesus Christ?
- 10) How do God's covenants confuse you?
- 11) Does your heart rejoice that Christ is the central theme of the Bible?
- 12) What parts of the Bible do you struggle to see Jesus Christ?
- 13) What prevents you from embracing good traditions?
- 14) Have you embraced finding comfort in knowing the faith is common?
- 15) How can you reject the idea of the Bible being about what I believe?
- 16) Where can you embrace the common faith more?
- 17) Do you use good confessions and catechisms?
- 18) How has it grown your understanding of the common faith?

Summary:

God in His perfect wisdom wrote the Bible. Language with the Holy Spirit reveals God's intent. God's intent is definable and examinable as language is examinable to humans with the Holy Spirit. As language reveals God's thought, God left a guide to learn His word to avoid error and embrace the common faith. God knew Christians would need a guide. Learn God's guide built into the Bible to find God's intent to receive the common faith with all its comforts. Yes, the common faith leads to many comforts. Study the Bible with great care to learn these comforts, knowing there will be difficult passages. God through covenants points to large ideas pointing to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Bible. When errors come, God defends His people with teachers and what they wrote. Embrace the common faith.

Chapter 5: God Creating the Local Church

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 26:1 - 1. The universal Church, which may be called invisible (in respect of the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) consists of the entire number of the elect, all those who have been, who are, or who shall be gathered into one under Christ, Who is the Head. This universal Church is the wife, the body, the fulness of Him Who fills all in all.¹

[ie: the universal Church is the true Church of the elect and must be regarded as invisible, because the purest Gospel churches may have in their memberships professing Christians who are hypocritical, mistaken or deluded with regard to their spiritual standing. Equally, the Lord has true believers isolated in unlikely environments. The 'truth of grace' refers to the reality of conversion.]

1 Heb 12.23; Col 1.18; Eph 1.10 & 22-23; 5.23-32.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 26:2 - 2. All people throughout the world who profess the faith of the Gospel and obedience to Christ on its terms, and who do not destroy their profession by any errors which contradict or overthrow Gospel fundamentals, or by unholy behaviour, are visible saints and may be regarded as such.² All individual congregations ought to be constituted of such people³ [as far as we can ensure].

2 1 Cor 1.2; Acts 11.26. 3 Rom 1.7; Eph 1.20-22.

Jeremiah 32:40 (NASB 95) 40 "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

With

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (NASB 95) 14 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 'In

those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is [the name] by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'

With

Matthew 16:17-18 (NASB 95) 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

With

John 1:12-13 (NASB 95) 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, [even] to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

With

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB 95) 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

With

Colossians 1:18 (NASB 95) 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Ideas throughout the Chapter:

- 1) Christ is the promised one through covenant
- 2) Christ forms the Church through His death
- 3) Christ is the head of the church through covenant

Please read additional references: Isaiah 48:19, Hosea 1:10, Acts 20:28, Romans 8:14, 1 Corinthians 16:16, Galatians 4:4-6, Hebrews 8:7-13, Hebrews 9:15, and Hebrews 13:17.

If God put humans into a covenant with commands to follow, can humans in darkness keep them? No. After the darkness entered the world, no human can keep and follow God's commands. How is this known? Look at the nation of Israel. There is a pattern of God's judgment on Israel, then God restoring as Israel repents. God is merciful, as He

stated. After Israel violates the commands again, God's consequences return as stated that God would do. God is gracious in seeing the weaknesses in humans. Still, the consequences will come. Please see Deuteronomy 28:15-68 with Nehemiah and Malachi. In God's infinite wisdom, God gives rewards yet will discipline perfectly for His desired outcome. The nation of Israel serves as a reminder to Christians that God is gracious but will still discipline based on covenant consequences. Adam is the best human who is without darkness besides Jesus Christ. Can Adam keep God's command leading to life, or does Adam fail in his covenant?

Adam, being the perfect human with no dark nature, failed. The covenant of works shows the best human cannot keep God's standard. In Genesis 2, God makes a covenant with Adam. The word covenant does not appear. The idea of covenant is present where God explains to Adam that to have life means not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam ate, death would come. There is a command with a reward and a consequence. One evil influence doomed all humans. Satan, through Eve, led Adam astray with a dark influence. Adam fell, dooming all humans. Why are humans doomed through Adam? Adam represents all humans as their leader. If Adam had life, all humans would have had life. When Adam fell, all humans fell with him. Back in Genesis 2, God makes the covenant with Adam alone. God created Eve after making the covenant with Adam. When Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, nothing happened. A random human breaking a command within the covenant of works is not enough. Adam is the one who leads humans to life or to death. Only Adam can uphold or violate the covenant of works. When Adam ate from the forbidden tree, death cursed him, other humans, and the Earth. All humans after Adam are children of wrath in open rebellion against God, with many offences worse than Adam's first offence. After Adam fell, a dark nature influences humans toward darkness from birth. Evil poisons all thoughts and actions for humans now. Please see Psalms 58:3 with Romans 3, Ephesians 2:1-7, and 1 John 1:7-10. The point is all humans now follow darkness. If the perfect human Adam with an unstable state fails, how can humans in darkness starting at birth keep God's standard? Therefore, there needs to be the superior Adam in Jesus Christ.

If Christians get the covenant of works wrong to reject the idea, then grace becomes something less than resting on God's mercy for salvation alone. Salvation rests on Christ's work on the cross. This means trusting in Christ's message of forgiveness as in hearing God's message, then trusting the message in the soul with a confession that Christ is Lord with the mouth. Please see Romans 10:8-18. God works in the hearts of humans in darkness by giving grace and faith as a gift, leading to confessing Christ as Lord. Please see Ephesians 2:8-9. This is all an act of God, where Christians cannot boast. If humans have the ability themselves to respond to God's call to repentance, boasting occurs. Why? Humans responded to God outside of God's activity. This is a

minor example of distorting the covenant of works. What humans do becomes worse. Many humans think eating bread gives grace outside of receiving the message of Christ alone. Others see reading the Bible and praying to God enough to earn their salvation through abusing spiritual activities. Some teachers see Christ saves from darkness, but then God will accept or deny into His kingdom Christians based on good works. The examples of confusion and denying the covenant of works are endless.

Chapter 2 stated that God grants faith and grace, leading to salvation. All of God's people from every tribe, nation, and people group belong to God because of God supplying mercy. For the covenant of grace to be all of grace, all aspects of salvation must rest on Christ's work and mercy. If humans have the ability to respond to God, it is an act of merit. Why? Humans are adding something to receive God's mercy. Nothing outside of God's mercy contributes to salvation. Humans in darkness repent because of God giving faith and grace. Yes, God commands all people to repent of darkness. Please see Acts 17:30. Remember Romans 8:5-7 as it explains humans in darkness cannot and will not submit to God. If there are humans that can submit, it means there are not in darkness requiring a saviour. Without the Holy Spirit working, no human can say Jesus Christ is Lord and mean it with true faith leading to pure actions. Please see 1 Corinthians 12:3. Confused Christians claim humans have some darkness and some good. The issue is that Romans 3 and Ephesians 2 deny that humans are good by nature. There is no point responding beyond this as the Bible is clear. No human is good, nor do humans have the ability to submit to God. Therefore, the covenant of grace is gracious. God brings lost humans into the light. Reader, either humans are good with the ability to seek God by God's standard or humans are not. Be consistent. If humans are good, they do not need Christ. Only the sick, as in having darkness as the Bible describes, need the great God and saviour Jesus Christ. Please see Mark 2:17 with Romans 3. If humans are in darkness, everything rests on God's mercy and ability to save from darkness. Again, be consistent.

How is Christ the superior Adam?

The covenant of grace, as the second covenant or Christ's covenant as stated in previous chapters, means humans rest on Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Jesus Christ is the only one who accomplishes salvation. The perfect life of Christ in keeping God's standards led to Christ's giving His perfection to humans. On the cross, Jesus Christ created the covenant of grace as God's justice fell on Him, clearing the debt for His people. Please see Galatians 4:3-5 with Hebrews 4:15, Colossians 2:13-15, and 1 Peter 2:21-25. Christ, the superior Adam, leads some humans in darkness to eternal life in God's mercy, appeasing God's justice. Eternal life is being known by God, not living forever as seen in John 17:1-3. Adam does not keep the covenant of works, showing that the best human

is incapable of meriting God's favour. Adam fails to maintain life for humans, but Christ upholds life for some humans through the second covenant as a covenant of grace. Where does the Bible express the divine thought of the superior Adam? Romans 5:1 to Romans 6:3 expresses how Adam brings death, making all humans rebelling criminals in God's justice. Adam is a type foreshadowing of Jesus Christ as seen in Romans 5:14. The Lord Jesus Christ represents some humans and gives them life, as the superior Adam. Christ gives his merit of upholding God's standard to humans who do not deserve or earn God's mercy. God's mercy is God's grace. Grace is unmerited favour, pardoning the dark crimes against God. God's grace is not to be demanded by humans. Why? Humans in darkness do nothing good but evil. The criminal cannot demand their sentence to be cleared. Please see Titus 1:15-16 with Proverbs 30:12. Nowhere does God declare He listens to humans in darkness, but the opposite. Please see Proverbs 15:28-29 with Proverbs 1:27-29 and John 9:31. Romans 9 speaks of God showing mercy to whom He will show mercy. God as judge pardons out of His mercy. There is no requirement for God to show mercy to all humans. God is merciful towards some humans. Therefore, the covenant of grace accomplished by Jesus is out of pure mercy and grace, not mixed with human merit or ability.

As God calls His people from Genesis to Revelation to salvation, salvation has come to some humans. What is the Church? The church comprises ethnic Jews and non-ethnic Jews wholly cleansed of darkness through the covenant of grace. Jesus Christ cleanses all of His people of darkness, pardons God's justice out of mercy, and makes them servants of light through spiritual rebirth. Please see 1 John 1:7, Romans 5:9-10, and Romans 6:3-10 with 2 Corinthians 5:17. This means God frees humans from darkness, removes the need to worry about God's justice, and recreates their immaterial parts so that they can love God. Christians are no longer defined by gender and race in the category of salvation. There are other categories that put restrictions on Christians. Please see Galatians 3:28-29 and 1 Timothy 2:12. To have salvation leads to holy living in the local church.

There are two aspects to the church. The first aspect is the invisible church, which is God's people throughout the world and throughout time. God joins these Christians to Himself forever. The second aspect is the local church. This is the gathering of Christians or at least humans who profess Christ in a local area. The dark world can see Christians gathering in local areas. Note, children or relatives of Christians are not a part of the church as Jesus Christ has not cleansed them. At best, they attend lacking faith. Parents have the responsibility to train their children. Training includes spiritual subjects like salvation. The local church should help. When children show spiritual interest leading to salvation, the local church welcomes them as Christians. Until salvation comes, they attend to hear about their need of salvation to rest on Jesus Christ. The local

church comprises Christians who profess Christ through the covenant of grace in a local area. The best local church may have false Christians who profess Christ as Lord, with other weaknesses among God's cleansed people. Since the local church is a spiritual group of forgiven humans from darkness, who is its head that rules and leads? Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He directs his people through the Bible alone. Please see Ephesians 5:23. To have a well developed ability to understand the Bible accesses Jesus Christ's commands for the body. The previous chapters should clarify divine thoughts for Christians. To follow God's divine guide is to know God's intent. To understand God's intent is to know Christ's commands for His people that are to be followed.

1689 Updated by Peter Masters - Of the Holy Scriptures - Chapter 26:4 - 4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. In Him, by the appointment of the Father, is vested in a supreme and sovereign manner all power [authority] for the calling [forming], institution, order, or government of the Church.⁷

The Pope of Rome cannot in any sense be head of the Church, but he is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, who exalts himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God, who the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.⁸

[This last paragraph is regarded by many who affirm this Confession, as the only debatable statement. There is no disagreement among them as to the heresy and darkness of the Church of Rome, nor of its instrumentality as a tool of Satan down the ages. The papal system is certainly utterly anti-Christian in spirit, form and effect. The issue is – will the last pope of time be a servant of the coming antichrist or will he be antichrist himself? Or, will the Church of Rome prove to be the antichrist? The 'man of sin' may turn out to be a person or even an atheistic ideology, but very few teachers today are prepared to make a definite identification. However, at the very least it must be said that the office of the 'Pope of Rome' is in the power of antichrist, and any serving pope is a man of sin and a son of perdition who exalts himself against the true Word and the message of grace.]

7 Col 1.18; Matt 28.18-20; Eph 4.11-12. 8 2 Thess 2.3-9.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. No other ruler is to rule the church. This means male elders do not rule over Christians. Male elders serve a special role, leading Christians to God through various activities. The next chapters will define these activities. Through the covenant of grace, Jesus Christ rules cleansed humans through the Bible alone. The Bible is a direct connection to the head as God speaks through the Bible alone now. God through the Bible uses moral law and positive law to direct His

people. All the aspects spoken about and more in prior chapters reveal God's will for the church expecting Christians will show love for God by following the commands. Please see John 14:15 with Acts 2. The local church is the place where Christians learn God's commands.

To conclude, Jesus is the superior Adam. Where Adam and the rest of humans failed to obtain salvation because of darkness, Jesus Christ secures salvation for some humans. This is the promise of all biblical covenants. Without Christ's death on a cross, there would be no salvation. Christ's salvation saves humans from darkness throughout history. All these humans form the spiritual group called the church. These humans form local churches for spiritual activities that the dark world can see. Christ through the Bible speaks to the local church through the divine guide to know His intent to be followed. Christians show love for God through following God's directions.

Questions:

- 1) Do you see the need for the covenant of grace?
- 2) Do you see why you need God to be merciful with humans, adding nothing to salvation?
- 3) Are you resting on Jesus Christ for salvation, or do you add something to salvation?
- 4) Do you see there is a spiritual people with a renewed soul loving Jesus Christ?
- 5) Does God command you through the Bible in the covenant of grace?
- 6) Are you using God's divine guide to know His intent in the Bible?
- 7) How does knowing God's intent lead to following His commands?
- 8) Do you see keeping God's commands as a sign of loving God?
- 9) How does following God's word lead you into professing Christ in the local church?

Summary:

God is merciful in saving some humans from darkness. Through the covenant of grace, Jesus Christ saves His people. Jesus Christ creates a spiritual people from humans in darkness through His act on the cross, leading to a new king for humans. This is all

because God is merciful. Jesus Christ is the saviour from darkness, becoming the most perfect king over a spiritual people. The Bible explains what Jesus Christ commands His people to do. God has left a divine guide to explain His intent.