*LAY IT ALL TO JESUS THE MERCIFUL GOD*

_Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, “I tell you, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel!” And when the officer’s friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed._

*Luke 7:7 – 10 (NLT)*

A great need all over the world is healing, from spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological illnesses, bitterness, pain and sorrows. No one is spared this unwanted cup of affliction – rich and poor, enslaved and free, white and black, old and young. It is a constant reminder of human weakness despite our advanced technologies and medical knowledge.

Jesus healed people of different kinds, ages, and levels of faith. The centurion, a senior Roman soldier, was not Jewish but understood more than most Jews that Jesus is God and has great spiritual power. He understood that Jesus did not need to be physically in the presence of the sick person, for his word to cure, heal, and bring life back into that sick person.

This is an incredible level of confidence in Jesus, considering that we who now have a record of the miracles of Jesus, still find it difficult to trust and call on him for help. Many of us read of Jesus miracles and just don’t believe; some of us think we are too sinful and cannot receive anything from Jesus; others prefer to cry in front of their Pastor for prayers.

This Bible passage is for everyone. This senior army officer was not even a Church goer; but he strongly believed in God’s goodness and power in Jesus. He made his request in all humility, Jesus was amazed, and next thing was _‘they found the slave COMPLETELY healed.’_ Please don’t suffer in agony and in silence – open up your mouth and pray to Jesus. Confess your sins and He is faithful and just to here you 1John 1:19. Then ask Him to heal you.

Do not be afraid, do not think I must find a Pastor and present him or her a large gift to pray for me. It does not require many words or high sounding grammar – simple sincere humble prayers like **‘Jesus, have mercy on me, deliver me from pain, compassionate God heal me from ill health, in your great love return me to good health’**, are acceptable to him. Bring any pain that you are going through. Bring any struggle and He will hear you.

_“Lay it all before Jesus the merciful God, and let him bring healing into your life, and situation. Amen!”_
I am a WORD nerd. I love the Word of God.

I also enjoy other words, their meanings, and how they make intangible things tangible. Our understanding can deepen if we look past the letters and into the meanings, and then the context the words are settled into. Our understanding becomes even deeper, when we relate to it not only with our minds, but with our hearts, making a personal connection. When we compare and contrast ideas in our hearts to what is on the page, when we take what we have read and ask ourselves how can I relate, do I agree/disagree and why? If we really want to have better understanding, we have to be willing to look at our perspective, and ask ourselves if our perspective is wrong, off-base, or shadowed in any way...and are we willing to see things in a different light? We then have opportunity to expose ideas or attitudes that have lain dormant and covered by our character traits and habits... WHOA there....that exposes me...that makes me vulnerable...that takes down some walls...yep, it sure does, but most likely they are walls that we erect ourselves, thinking that we need them to provide us protection, when really they only imprison us in unhealthy thoughts, feelings and attitudes....So the question remains for you and I, What do I really want?

Honestly, we can all say that we can recognize that our thoughts produce feelings, our feelings create attitudes, and our attitudes create habits and our habits form character, right?

If you think about something that you love, chocolate cake, warm fire in the fireplace, jammies, and a cup of joe, surrounded by your family... hmmm

On the other hand... something that produces fear...racing heartbeat and an icy dread....hmmm

One of those things you will be drawn to the other you will avoid like the plague, and will set up parameters in your mind and heart to avoid at all costs, eh?

Sometimes the decisions that we make are based on our feelings, attitudes and past habits, but that doesn’t always provide us with the best outcome unless our thoughts that led us there were based on truth, and full of love. The only place I know to find that...Truth and Love is in Jesus Christ.

Have you ever experienced a pattern in your life that everywhere you go there you are, and the outcome is always the same, you are not satisfied with the way you behaved, in fact you are disgusted with yourself, and can’t believe that again you would choose to react in that way ...

Something led you there...in fact if you go backwards.... there is a pattern in your behavior, a pattern in your attitude, a pattern in your feelings, and a pattern in your thoughts...

Whose thoughts are they?

Am I willing to try something new?

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and do not return there but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall My word that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. ‘For you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.’”Is 55:8-13

“Prepare the way of the Lord ”Is 40:3

Thoughts are something that we give serious attention to; they are ideas, plans or opinions. They are even pictures that are formed in our minds. They are the process of our thinking, thoughts can build on one another, we can carefully think about the details of something. We give serious regard and respect even admiration or a protective interest to our thoughts.

Our thoughts produce feelings.

Feelings are awareness by our bodies of something in it or on it. Feelings are an emotional state or reaction; feelings are an appreciative or responsive awareness or recognition.

Our feelings form attitudes

An attitude is the way we think and feel about something. It is a feeling or way of thinking that affects our behavior. It is a mental position or stance; a feeling or emotion toward a fact or a state.

Our attitudes create habits.

(continued on page 3)
A habit is a usual way of behaving. It is a prevailing disposition or character of a person’s thought’s or feelings. It is a settled tendency, a force of habit it is like clothing that we wear, it is a manner of conducting ourselves.

Habits form character.

Character is built by the way someone thinks feels and decides to act.

If I am reading the Bible, what is my purpose? Is it only to have head knowledge, or am I reading to really know the One who gave his life for me?

Is it my desire to grow and mature in Christ, or am I satisfied with the mere appearance of religion?

So, knowing this, we have a choice… Do I listen to what the Word of God says and Prepare the way of the LORD? Do I prepare the way that I think feel and decide based on the authority and love of the Word of GOD, or do I branch out on my own, and stay where I am at. We are the only ones that can make that decision. God will not force us to accept His love for us. He loves us no matter what we choose. Yet we must ask ourselves what do we really desire? And am I willing to chase after it with everything I have got?

*The Lord is the strength of my life. Psalm 27:1*

Strength is: a place or means of safety or protection. It is a refuge, a stronghold. It is the ability to resist being moved or broken by a force. Strength is a quality that allows you to deal with problems in a determined and effective way. Strength is endurance.

Hmm…. that is one of my desires… That the LORD is the strength of my life.

The unchanging nature of God is that He provides stability and peace for us. Yet we have to come to that place that we are less concerned about the thoughts that create tension for us…The thoughts that draw us away, the need for acceptance, status and even possessions, and more concerned with guarding the Truth that has been entrusted to us… Truly we have been given all things that pertain to godliness. If that Truth has become personal for us, the tension will not toss us, but we will stay firmly planted in the Truth.

Truth is we are fully accepted in Christ, we need Him for everything, and honestly, pride and independence keep us from God. Humility and dependence on Him keep us abiding in His Spirit.

Have you ever said, “I was really having a difficult time, I had my Bible, but I just didn’t have the time to read it?” Honestly, that is just our way of saying “la-la-la-la” to God…selective hearing…one might say…

“For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

His Word is able to speak to the deepest part of our hearts, to the buried and closed off spots. It is able to cut to the core. It is able to walk through closed, locked and barricaded doors. It is able to separate away for us the thing or things that have caused us such separation and pain without Him. In the moment that we “see” Him, and “see” the Truth, we have the choice to receive His grace, the healing and freedom that He offers. Yet, if we are settled in our own way of thinking, if we really do not believe His love for us, if our thoughts about God are not the Truth about who He is, we will reject the freedom that His Spirit is leading us to, and cling to the lie that we have kept hidden in our hearts for so long. He will allow us to remain in our place of choice. If we decide to give the highest regard to the lie, to exalt it over the knowledge of God, He will allow us our king.

What do we really desire? What do we really want? We get to choose.
Deliberate Choices Jesus Made

OF NO REPUTATION

"Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Phil 2: 6-8

He made Himself nothing; He emptied Himself. This is the quiet wisdom you must learn all the time.

There is a subtle reputation that accrues to a man, once God begins to lift him up for His Church to see. It builds up gradually. It forms an aura around him. It seeks to become his own identity. It ascribes him a status and hence makes him a statue . . . It seeks to place him somewhere in a position high up. People are too eager to pronounce that reputation and sing about it. But that is the subtle pit into which many have fallen and become discarded.

Reputation will surely build up around you — among men and even the brethren, but Jesus deliberately, constantly, repeatedly and promptly made Himself of no reputation. He emptied it out; poured it out as a libation to God. People spoke highly of Him, but mistook Him for another when they saw Him.

He refused to grab the public ovation by walking in obscurity. He avoided large gatherings where His fame could be fanned into flame. He walked unnoticed among men. He did menial things and kept company with ordinary folks. Lazarus was a friend, Zacchaeus was a friend, His disciples were ordinary men too. Children had access to Him; He picked up kids and played and prayed with them.

You must learn wisdom from His lifestyle.

This is the keyword: "He made Himself." Otherwise, people were eager to crown Him, put Him up there, carry Him shoulder-high and talk highly of Him everywhere. Though legitimately His, He made Himself of no reputation.

Do not misunderstand this! It is normal for people to do these things to you. They will honor you in the way they think best. They will lay down their backs for you to ride upon. They will bow their heads as a sign of honor. They will avoid any insult to your person. You may not, like Jesus, even make any demand for the honor. He never sought honor from men, yet, they sang about Him. But, when they have done all they want, it is your own personal choice and duty to make yourself of no reputation.

May the Lord help you.
Resolutions

As the wind is howling outside my windows, the thermometer is registering 18 below and my cats are lying on top of my heat registers trying to stay warm I am drawn to the Bible verses in John 15. Jesus is with the disciples talking about the vine and the branches and how our Heavenly Father prunes back the branches so that the new growth can begin.

For some, 2017 cannot be over soon enough, but as we enter the New Year 2018, I think of all the times that I have made New Year’s resolutions. I vow either to start a new diet, go to the gym more often, quit smoking, eat better, drink less, save money, get a better job and the list goes on and on and on. Every year I last about two or maybe three weeks into the new year before I forget the promises that I had made.

Some studies show that about 88% of people making New Year resolutions fail, and I have always been in the 88 percentile. Maybe I did not try hard enough, maybe I set my goals to high, or just maybe some of what I was trying to do was not within my capability.

In John 15, as Jesus is walking with the disciples in the garden he is talking to them about how we must prune the vine to start new growth or to promote the fruit to start growing. The book Secrets of the Vine by Bruce Wilkinson talks about the time that spent with a man who owned a vineyard. The author learned how important it is to take the vines that grow on the bottom and wash their leaves off so that the dirt and the mold don’t cause diseases to form. After, it is important to tie the vines up keeping them of the ground to make sure that the fruit has a chance to produce abundantly.

Maybe we need to prune our vines this year so that we can promote new growth. Maybe we need to get rid of whatever it is that holds us back and hinders us from starting to grow and flourish. Is it unforgiveness, jealousy, anger, or maybe resentment that holds you back?

Galatians 5:22 says, “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness self-control.” In order for us to produce the good fruit, we need to prune out the old and diseased. We need to trim back the years of scar tissue that formed and start the new year out with setting goals that we can achieve.

This year I want to spend more time reading my Bible. I want to help other people and find some way to be a volunteer. I want to become a better steward and plant some seeds of Faith. I want to pray daily. I want to develop positive habits.

As the year 2018 begins, it might be too cold outside to do any pruning of vines, but the vines that Jesus was referring to does not require us to be out in the cold nor do we need to wait for spring to begin. We can begin now by deciding that we are going to be fruitful. We can read our Bibles daily, spend time with Jesus in prayer and worship, and invite others to join us.

The best way that I can think of to start the year 2018 off right is to ask Jesus to be the focus for this year. By making Jesus my New Year’s resolution, I do not need to worry about failure he will always be with me.
I love New Years because it's always an opportunity for new beginnings. I believe 2018 is the year of double portion. This means that God will pour out double for all those who believe in the Lord! I really believe that God is speaking to all those who are willing to follow him, without understanding the meaning, or reason behind what He asks you to do. That is exactly what the disciples did. Jesus never explained anything to them before they dropped everything to follow Him. He is calling us to do the same today. Drop everything that is not of God — drop the bad language, the useless gossiping, name bashing, and your selfishness — and follow Him. A disciple is a follower of Jesus who accepts and helps spreads the teaching, and is disciplined after our Lord and Savior.

There are so many people turned off by Christians today because the life they live does not match up with what they proclaim. The word “Christian” means to be Christ-like, but in today’s world there are not many people who are truly Christ-like. Being a Christian is not living for what you can gain from Christ, but for what you can give to Christ. You need to be a servant like Christ was. He left his throne to become a servant to us.

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus died a shameful sinner’s death on the cross. Did he die for us to live our wicked life, with no regard of his sacrifice, and with no moral conviction to our own sins or sinful living? Should we just look the other way when we know someone is hurting or in need and walk by like the priest did in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). No! He is calling us to walk like Him.

Who are you? Are you someone who is living for yourself? Or are you someone whom God has chosen from the beginning of time, to accomplish his purpose and you are walking in it today? It is not always easy to be a Christian, nor is it easy to walk where Christ walked. But with God, following His ways, we can be more than we ever could have dreamed for ourselves. His word promises us in Ephesians 3:20, ”Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

So I challenge you, if you really say with your mouth that you love the Lord, and you want to follow Him, then everyday discipline yourself after the pure and holy life he lived. Then we can accomplish much through Him for His Glory!!

I’m super excited about what God has in store for us in 2018.