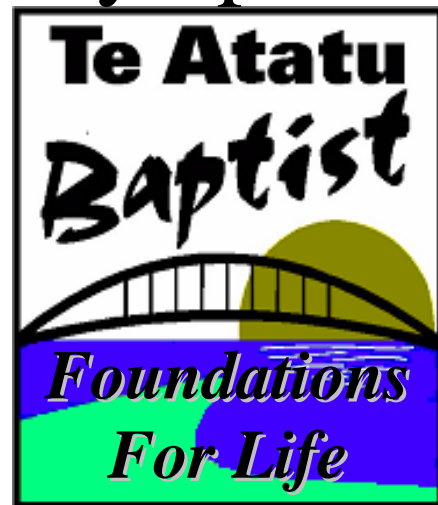


Toxic Religion verses Growing in Grace!



Study Number Two:
A 'healthy' dependency upon God!



March 11th 2007

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Te Atatu Baptist Church

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Mentor, Supervisor and Brother in the Lord!

This Bible Study Booklet is intended to be given away!

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There's a story about a little boy who attended Sunday School, and loved God.

Slide # 2 – Photo of happy boy

He wanted to tell everyone about the love of Jesus, so went up to a stranger on the street and said; 'Sir, do you know Jesus?'

'I'll have you know young man, that I hold a doctorate in Theology, and have been a pastor for thirty seven years straight!'

'Oh', replied the little boy, 'Then you shouldn't let that stop you from knowing Him!'

You know, we laugh at that, and think it funny – but there's a lot of truth contained in that story!

Believe me, I've completed a degree in theology, and although wonderfully helpful and good, it was also immensely damaging upon my 'childlike' trust and faith in God.

The great thing about all this, is that God understands, knows and wants us to find fullness of life!

Not only – as the Bible describes in Heb 4:15, do we have 'a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.'

But we also have a pastor as well!!!

Many of these areas we covered last week, I have personally struggled with over my journey of faith.



As 2nd Corinthians 1:3 says, ‘I am able to comfort you with the same comfort I have received from the Lord myself!’

You know, I have re-written this message at least three entire times!

I just haven’t been satisfied with it.

Sometimes it’s been too critical, negative or damning, and at other times it’s been more ‘heavenly minded than any earthly use!’

Slide # 3 – can of worms!

What I don’t want to do today, is this – PHOTO!



Then, as I was taking my son to drum practice on the back of my bike, God spoke to me in a ‘small still voice’, as He often does *after* I have exhausted my own wisdom and plans!!!

You see, this is the assurance we can have, as Galatians 5:16 says from the Living Bible:

Slide # 4 – Scripture verse

I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions. He will tell you where to go and what to do. Gal 5:16 (Living)

We can have assurance that as followers of Christ, the Holy Spirit does guide and direct our paths!

While it is right and good for us to ‘be constant in prayer’,

...what this actually means, is learning to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit as we go about our everyday lives.

Because God wants to guide and direct, and help us along *every* step of our lives!

Well, as I was riding my bike, with my son on the back, I was pondering this sermon, and almost crying out to God for help.

You might know that sort of prayer.

It’s perhaps the most common prayer I pray.

‘God HELP!!!’

You know, that’s the kind of prayer that God loves to answer as well!

Slide # 5 – Children Praying

I’ve heard it said that God loves answering ‘knee Mail’!

He answered my ‘prayer of desperation’ by bringing back a ‘sermon illustration’ that I had used many years ago.



You see, the way bank tellers can spot a counterfeit note or coin instantly, is NOT by studying counterfeit notes or coins.

It is by constantly being exposed to the REAL thing, that they are able to spot a fraud in an instant.

It just doesn't look right, feel right, weigh the same, sit in the palm of your hand the same, reflect the light in the same way, even smell the same.

I think you know where this is going!

As a young believer, God placed a 'call' upon my life, and He confirmed it through His holy Word, the Bible.

My 'life verse' comes from Acts 20:24: **My life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus--the work of telling others the Good News about God's mighty kindness and love.**

(Living)

Over the course of these studies, I am not going to tell you the negative, what NOT to do.



I am going to tell you the 'GOOD NEWS' the POSITIVE things to do in your heart and life!

Slide # 6 – Toxic lollies graphic

The topics we are going to look at over the next few weeks, are often times NOT toxic in themselves.

What makes them toxic, is when Christians fail to ‘let go of them’, or ‘hold them in moderation’ and use them, or believe in them, to an extreme.

When a Christian IS an extremist in one or more of these areas, it tells you more about *their* personality and character, than it does about God, or the doctrine they have abused.

Indeed, you can have two people with the same belief and outworking of that belief, but one is toxic and the other healthy.

An example of this, is two Christians, both loving and serving God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

Both come to church early and help set up the chairs and tables, both pray and seek God earnestly, attending the prayer meeting and homegroups.

The first does it out of a healthy understanding of God and His love and grace, and all they do – is a response to all God has done for them.

It is a heart that longs to worship and adore God BECAUSE of His grace and love.

The other does it out of insecurity, because they think if they don’t serve God with every breath they have, God might reject them and stop loving them.

During these studies, we will follow one of the teaching methods of Jesus, where he would ‘de-construct’ a belief structure in a person’s life, and then ‘re-construct’ with the truth.

Now, I don’t think it is necessarily healthy or wise to systematically work through each of the topics we uncovered last week.

In fact, today we will just look at one of them, Spiritual fatalism, and then I want to share with you about the most important decision you will ever make in your life!

Slide # 7 Photo – Black and White!

1. Spiritual Fatalism – ‘Black or White’ mentality.

This is a Christian version of Hindu ‘fatalism’, accepting everything as either from the hand of God, or an attack of the devil! It is a failure to understand the power God has given to us – to make decisions for ourselves!

Slide # 8

In Genesis 1:28 – we read these words:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God has wonderfully given to us the mandate to ‘rule over the world, subdue it, have dominion over it!’

God has wonderfully gifted you and me with ‘sovereignty’ over much in life and faith.



Slide # 9

And if we think we lack wisdom to make the right decisions, then according to James 1:5, we should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Slide # 10

If we are fearful about making decisions, or about anything in life, then we can have confidence that according to 2nd Timothy 1:7 ‘God has not given us a spirit of timidity or fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline!

The Amplified Bible says it beautifully, like this:

Slide # 11

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity – of cowardice, of craving and fawning fear – but He has given us a spirit of power, and of love, and of a calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self control!

Like a loving father who has taught and trained his beloved children until they leave the family home,

...He gives us permission, and expects us to make wise and informed decisions – *for ourselves* – based upon the concepts and precepts of His holy Word,

...and by seeking the wisdom and counsel of other godly people.

Slide # 12

Yet He still longs for us, to **in everything, with prayer and thanksgiving, to make our request made known to Him!** Phil 4:6

God wants you to ‘walk and talk’ with Him each and every moment of the day.

While sitting at your desk, to pause and commit your day to Him.

While hanging our the washing, to thank Him for His beautiful creation and the family He has blessed you with!

Slide # 13

And if we struggle with anxiety over the future, or making decisions, then we are to **‘cast all our anxieties upon Him, for He cares for us!** 1 Peter 5:7

The word ‘cast’ is the same word used when a boat ‘casts’ off its ropes that held it to the dock.

In this same way, we are to ‘cast’ off our anxieties, and allow the Lord Jesus to bring healing and comfort into our hearts and minds.

While there are some Christians who are fearful to make decisions for their lives, and spend their time procrastinating, and ‘praying’ when they should be acting.

And indeed, like when Moses stood at the edge of the Red Sea, and stood there in indecisiveness, pouring his heart out to God in prayer, and God said these words from the Living Bible in Exodus 14:15

Slide # 14

Moses, stop praying and start moving!!!

For most of us, it is the other way around.

We need to stop moving so much, and start praying.

As for the other area mentioned, regarding the cosmic fight between good and evil, between God and Satan, we must realise that satan and his hoards were totally and utterly disarmed at the cross of Calvary.

Yet in saying this, the battle still continues.

Let me share an awesome example of this, that will be insightful and new to some of us, and a 'refresher course' to others.

But you know, although I sometimes repeat similar themes or teachings, it's actually okay to do that.

Slide # 15

Like Paul said in Philippians 3:1 It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Providing it is still refreshing and interesting, we actually *need* to be reminded of these things from time to time.

This will help us understand how the war over sin and death – over Satan and his hoards - has been won, but yet the battle continues, and why evil still haunts and affects us all.

On the one hand, we know that Christ is ‘the only Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15).

Slide # 16 – Photo of beach invasion



But for a time, until the ‘Day of the Lord’ is completed at the second coming, we must live under two kingdoms, the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God.

Our situation is much like the Allies in World War II.

The decisive battle, that broke the back of the Nazi army, was fought and won by the Allies on June 6th 1944.

This day is known as what? *D-Day. (Operation Overload.)*

But even though the war was won, the battle continued for another eleven months until V-E Day (Victory in Europe), 8th May 1945, when Hitler committed suicide, and Germany surrendered.

The frightening thing about this, is that more lives were lost between D-Day and V-E Day,

...during this eleven month period, than during the entire WWII.

The war had been won, but the battle continued!

Slide # 17 Photo of VE Day

For this world, the battle began in the garden of Eden, it was won on the Cross, and it will finish at the second coming of Christ.

For Christians, our D-Day is Easter.

Slide # 18 - Scripture

The Bible tells us in Col 2:15 that;
having disarmed the powers and authorities, Christ made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.



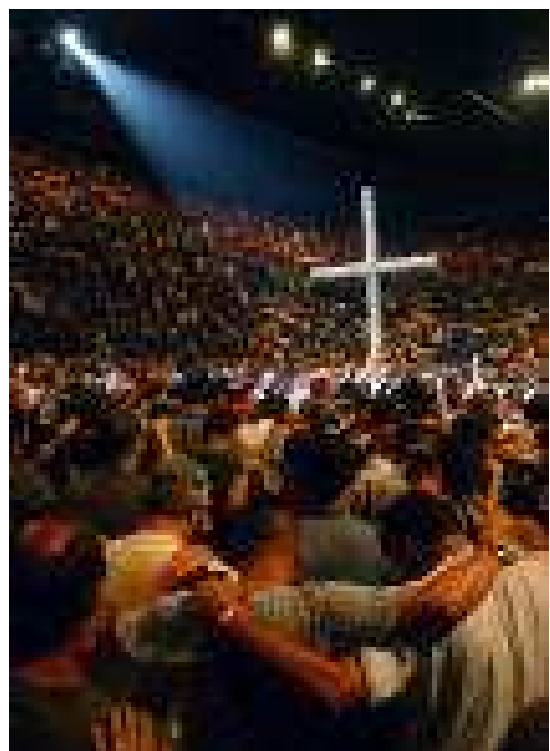
That was the day of victory, D-Day for God's people!

But although the War is won, and Jesus is the victor, the battle continues, and our V-E-Day (Victory in Eternity!) will not happen until Christ's second coming.

Just as it was for World War II, with more casualties between D-Day and V-E-Day, so it is for Christians.

Slide # 19 – Crusade Photo

Between our D-Day when Jesus rose from the dead, and our V-E-Day when He returns, we will have battles and



casualties, we will have sickness and violence.

But also, we will have intermittent moments of victory, when the enemies of sin and sickness are overcome.

We must stand together and believe in a God who heals and delivers, but we must also hold in our other hand the reality of death and decay.

You know, so far today, we've been talking about stuff that is somewhat 'removed' from the real issues of our hearts.

And as I prayed and sort the mind of God for today, I believe the Holy Spirit led me to a very interesting verse in Hebrews 2:14, 15.

In fact, God also laid this verse on my heart last Sunday, and I believe He did so, because it is a real issue in some of our hearts.

I believe God has a 'Rhema' for many of us here today.

A 'Rhema' is when God takes a verse from the Bible, and applies it directly to our hearts and lives.

In the Psalms, the Bible talks about 'the deep calling to the deep', and my prayer is that the depth of God's Spirit and Word will speak to the depths of your heart and soul today.

Please allow me to read to you from Hebrews 2:14, from the Living Bible.

Slide # 20

Since we, God's children, are human beings--made of flesh and blood--he became flesh and blood too by being born in human form; for only

as a human being could he die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death. **15** Only in that way could he deliver those who through fear of death have been living all their lives as slaves to constant dread.

Heb 2:14-15 (Living)

Many, many people today are ‘held captive by the fear of death’, and live their lives ‘as slaves to constant dread’.

Part of the path towards healing and freedom in this area, is to have absolute confidence in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord over life and death.

Your life, and your death!

Towards this end, and to help you find complete and utter inner peace and a ‘supernatural’ freedom from the fear of death, I want us to briefly look at one other topic today, and that – to ask the question:

Slide # 21

So – how do I *become* a Christian?

Today IS the day of Salvation, and it’s time to ‘come home to the Father.’

If you are blessed to already know the Lord Jesus Christ and your Savior and Lord, then God has a task for you over the next five minutes.

And that is to pray in your spirit for the salvation of every person here today.

For some of us, we may act like a Christian, and even have others *think* we are a Christian, but in our heart of hearts, we know we are not.

Behold, today – is the day of salvation!

The central theme of the Bible is God's love for you and for all people.

This love was revealed when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world as a human being,

...lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Because Christ died, your sins can be forgiven, and because He conquered death you can have eternal life,

...you can know for sure what will become of you after you die.

You have probably heard the story of God's love referred to as the "Gospel."

The word Gospel simply means "Good News."

The Gospel is the Good News that, because of what Christ has done, we can be forgiven and can live forever.

But this gift of forgiveness and eternal life cannot be yours unless you willingly accept it.

God requires an individual response from you today.

I want to briefly share some verses from the Bible that show God's part and your part in this process:

Slide # 22 Scripture and Photo

God's Love Is Revealed in the Bible

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." —John 3:16 (NIV)



God loves you. He wants to bless your life and make it full and complete. And He wants to give you a life which will last forever, even after you experience physical death.

Slide # 23

We Are Sinful

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." —Romans 3:23 (NIV)

You may have heard someone say, "I'm only human—nobody's perfect."

This Bible verse says the same thing: We are all sinners.

We all do things that we know are wrong.

And that's why we feel estranged from God—because God is holy and good, and we are not.

Indeed, the greatest sin that exists within the world today, is the same sin that exists within our very hearts.



That is the sin of unbelief!

Unbelief is NOT dis-believing in something, but failing to believe in something *so much* that it changes your heart and life.

The book of James in the Bible clearly tells us that ‘The devil even believes in God!’

One thing I know for sure, is that the Devil is not saved, and never will be!

‘Believing’ is NOT simply knowing something in your mind, it is a belief that results in a changed heart and life.!

Slide # 24

Sin Has a Penalty

"For the wages of sin is death." —Romans 6:23 (NIV)

Just as criminals must pay the penalty for their



crimes, sinners must pay the penalty for their sins.

If you continue to sin, you will pay the penalty of spiritual death:

You will not only die physically; you will also be separated from our holy God for all eternity.

The Bible teaches that those who choose to remain separated from God will spend eternity in a place called hell.

Slide # 25

Christ Has Paid Our Penalty!

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." —Romans 5:8 (NIV)

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, has paid the penalty for all your sins.

You may think you have to lead a good life and do good deeds before God will love you.

But the Bible says that Christ loved you enough to die for you, even when you were rebelling against Him.



Salvation Is a Free Gift

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." —Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

The word grace means "undeserved favor."

It means God is offering you something you could never provide for yourself: forgiveness of sins and eternal life, God's gift to you is free.



You do not have to work for a gift.

All you have to do is joyfully receive it.

Believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ died for you!

Christ Is at Your Heart's Door

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." —Revelation 3:20 (NIV)



Jesus Christ wants to have a personal relationship with you.

Picture, if you will, Jesus Christ standing at the door of your heart (the door of your emotions, intellect and will).

Invite Him in; He is waiting for you to receive Him into your heart and life.

Slide # 28

You Must Receive Him

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." —John 1:12 (NIV)

When you receive Christ into your heart you become a child of God, and have the privilege of talking to Him in prayer at any time about anything.



The Christian life is a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

And best of all, it is a relationship that will last for all eternity.

Although being a Christian is a life long journey, it often starts with a decision of the will.

You must choose to follow Christ.

You can't ignore this choice, the Bible says that you are: either for Him or against Him.

There really is no neutral ground!

If you are wanting to follow Christ today, you can choose to do so RIGHT NOW!

When you are ready, you can pray a simple prayer like the following.

Please remember, this prayer has no 'power' of its own, the only power to save, is in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Slide # 29

Dear Lord Jesus

I believe in You! I believe in Your holy Word, the Bible and all it has to say about the love and forgiveness You have towards me. I want to receive this love, receive Your forgiveness. I ask You to come into my heart and life and make me Your child! Please help me to repent – to stop doing the things that are wrong and hurtful towards You, other people, and myself. Give me the strength to follow You for the rest of my life.

In Jesus Name I pray. Amen

If you are making this commitment to Christ today, please [let us know](#). We would like to send you Bible study materials to help you grow in your faith.

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