

Measured by
The Book

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I knew a man who worked as a laborer for a carpenter. Unfortunately, he decided to go into business for himself, and the first house he built was a disaster. Every wall was crooked; not one angle was right. Understandably, he had a difficult time finding jobs after that. His problem? Among other things, he didn't understand how to use a plumbline.

A plumbline is a cord with a weight at one end, used to determine whether or not a wall is vertical to the foundation. This kind of measurement marks the difference between a straight, stable structure that can withstand unusual pressures and a crooked, compromised building that could easily collapse, even on a good foundation.

As colaborers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9), called to build upon a firm foundation, we must learn how to handle the proper tools precisely (2 Timothy 2:15). This booklet defines how the

Word revealed by the Holy Spirit—God’s “plumbline”—is not only the way we will be measured when we stand before God. It is the instrument we use to align ourselves with God’s perfect will.

Chapter One
GOD'S PLUMBLINE

“Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise” (Isaiah 60:18).

“...and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

“And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more” (Amos 7:7-8).

“For we are labourers together with God:...ye are God's building.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:9-11).

God’s people have walls of protection surrounding them, and He calls those walls “Salvation.” The prophet Amos saw the Lord standing upon such a wall, and a plumbline was in His hand. For a wall to remain “plumb” or perfectly straight, it must be built upon a sure foundation. From eternity past, Jesus Christ is that foundation—the perfect foundation for every person’s life (Isaiah 28:16).

Can Your Hiding Place Withstand the Truth?

Even where the foundation is sure, it is possible for a wall to be out of line. Therefore, every born-again believer must know how to measure according to God’s standard, His Word. We are to build with the proper materials, according to 1 Corinthians 3:12. We are to build with silver (redemption), gold (purity), and precious stones (the aspects of God’s character)—all having an eternal weight of glory—and not the unstable wood, hay, and stubble of our humanity.

The men in our building and maintenance department are faithful servants who know how to use a plumbline—personally and profession-

ally. They have taken rundown buildings and transformed them into great places of worship. But to do that, they needed a firm foundation, good building materials, and a measuring device with a plummet to make things square or "true."

Many people are very precise and particular about the standards they follow for everything they do on earth, yet they are not nearly as particular about following God's plumbline for eternity. Other people are careless and slothful, looking for ways to "just get by" without seriously considering that there is a day when every man and woman will face God.

Isaiah 28:14-22 tells the story of what happens to those who make their own standards and, by doing so, mock God. They make lies their refuge and think they will be protected, but their agreement is with death and hell. Their covenant is with Satan, the father of lies.

The Exchange of Love versus Lies

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and

righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place” (Isaiah 28:16-17).

This passage reveals Jesus Christ as the strength of every believer’s life. (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-7). He is the Living Word, and we are measured by no other standard. It also indicates that, spiritually speaking, many people have devised a plumbline to protect their lifestyles and their private interpretation of Scripture. When Eve saw the fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she remembered that God had said something about it, but her recollection was not precise. Satan told her, “You shall not surely die if you eat of it” (see Genesis 3:4), privately interpreting God’s Word, our plumbline.

Still, God is not mocked. Though we may suffer the consequences of our behavior, God always comes through with mercy that withholds the judgment we deserve, and grace that gives us what we don’t deserve: His love that goes beyond our fault and sees our need.

Chapter Two

GOD'S LOVE: OUR POINT OF REFERENCE

The members of the Trinity have always had the same attributes, the same nature, so they could freely exchange their love for each other. Billions of years ago, God the Father said to God the Son, "I love you." God the Son said to God the Spirit, "I love you." It was a mutual love—a love that they could exchange. When we were lost, God the Father sent the Son to die for us on the Cross, offering us the staying power of eternal security.

The point of reference for our relationship with God is love. The Bible makes that crystal clear.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"The LORD hath appeared of unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved with an everlasting love:

therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

God is love (1 John 4:8); He personally loves us just as we are. He saved us by grace and justified us while we were ungodly (Romans 4:5). Before we were saved, however, He could not exchange love with us. All He could do was offer us His love, but that was not an exchange. God *does* want us to have an exchange of love, and 2 Thessalonians 3:5 says that God wants a Christian to direct his heart toward the "love of God." According to the Greek text, however, it says "love *for* God."

A New Kind of Exchange

What God is saying is this: "I want to direct you into a love for Me so that we exchange our love according to My nature. Then, you can grow in grace and knowledge, and I will receive the glory forever" (see 2 Peter 3:18).

God wants us to have love for Him when we can exchange His nature as we receive it through His promises (2 Peter 1:4). The great thing is that God's nature never changes. It is the same from eternity to eternity.

If we sin, God has a solution: we are to confess our sin, and He is faithful and just to forgive

us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This means we make a decision to have a solution from God's grace at the point of reference, which is God's love. Then, God forgives us. That means He will forgive us without exception because of what He accomplished at Calvary as our reference point of love.

Love That Passes Knowledge

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

Now, I am giving you a little taste of Bible college training here. This is more than just a little Sunday School lesson. What I want you to see is this amazing principle of the noun of action, God's love.

The Greek syntax of this verse goes beyond telling us what to do. It tells us to *do* it! The dramatic infinitive is saying, “Start having a love that goes beyond yourself through the Holy Spirit's power, the Word of God, and the resurrection life of God working within you.”

Many Christians know the Word, but they do not live in it. Go beyond knowledge and into *pleroma*,* which speaks of having all of your empty places filled by God. Then, we can be led

into the presence of God and into submission to His honor code for the royal family.

Next, we submit to proper delegated authority, whether it is dad, mom, the boss, or anyone else in the plan of God. We are led into practical obedience because we have a love for God.

Yet, according to Ephesians 3:19, instead of only having a love for God, we are able to have the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. I have the love *of* God and a love *for* God. He is free to exchange mercy, grace, peace, righteousness, holiness, and the execution of His justice with us. On a personal level, God and I exchange our love in a fellowship of light and life. My love is no longer just one way. I have a love for God. With regard to others, I have the unconditional love of God that is not based on what they do or how they respond.

A Mighty Forgress

An extremely wealthy man committed adultery, and his marriage was in jeopardy. When he accepted Christ as his personal Savior, this man said, "My business controlled me, my riches controlled me, and finally my lust controlled me. It is time for God to control me."

The Bible says, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28).

The walls of salvation, as we read in Isaiah 26:1, provide a fortress for us. God will do exceedingly abundantly above anything we could ask or think. We operate in who He is on the basis of what He has done. That way, we reveal His divine nature and character received through His precious promises (2 Peter 1:4).

**For more about pleroma, read, The Greatest Reward: Go for It!, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

THE STANDARD THAT STANDS

In Luke 4, after Jesus had gone forty days without food, Satan said to Him, "Take this stone and turn it into bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Next, Satan said, "Bow down and worship me, and I will give You power over all these kingdoms."

Jesus responded: "It is written, you shall worship only the Lord."

Then Satan said, "Jump down from this building, and God will give angels to keep You from falling to the ground." He was trying to get Jesus to presume, which no one can do.

So Jesus said, "It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Then Satan left Him.

What are we talking about here? Jesus Christ

relied completely on the accuracy of God's plumbline: the Holy Scriptures.

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

This message is repeated in Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, and Revelation 22:18-19. All of these passages warn against either adding to or taking away from the Word of God. Furthermore, 2 Peter 1:19-21 says clearly that there can be no private interpretation of the Scriptures.

"Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, ...them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

Then Jesus said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47).

What is God's plumbline? It is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. It is eternal, impecca-

ble, and immutable.

Teach Your Children Well

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12). This is the first and great commandment.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

God is saying to children, “I have a plumb-line of honor toward your parents. Honor them, and I will honor you.” Children are personally accountable to the Word they have been taught.

Every parent I know wants his children to grow up to be responsible and accountable. We are so grateful when they turn out that way.

A couple recently brought two children for a baby dedication. For a time, these parents had been separated and were involved with drug addiction. They came to church one Sunday in desperation, and they were gloriously saved that day.

They have been clean for more than two years and are now ministering the Word of God

to others. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are using the principle of rebound and recovery if they fail. They are working out what is written, what is contained in the Plumbline: the Word of God.

If you are living in sin, please repent now. These are not the words of a man; these are God's words. Get right with Him in any area that does not line up with His precious plumbline.

It is so crucial to understand that children, according to Psalm 45:16, are to be princes of the earth. The Lord wants them to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of Himself. From early life on, He wants them to be taught the Word of God and its value system. Children must be taught godly virtues so they can be winners in life.

A True Standard: Pure and Clear

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11).

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you,

as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:3)

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

“[Be] not slothful in business; [but be] fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11).

These are God’s words. If two people are living together and they are not married, then according to the Plumbline they are in serious trouble. A person who uses pornography—even to indulge in mental fantasies of adultery—is going against God’s Word. A person who is slothful and irresponsible with regard to work and finances is “crooked” according to God’s plumbline.

“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Consider the Scriptures and understand the purpose of a plumbline. We are not to add to the Word of God. We are not to take away from it. Furthermore, we are not to privately interpret the Word. This Word is what will judge us in the last days.

All that the Word of God teaches is to prepare us for anything that can happen in our

lives. A pastor prepares his people so they will be ready when they face God in heaven where every man will be judged according to God's Word. Therefore if God chastises us, He does it because of love, to bring peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:6, 11). Even chastisement is done from the point of reference of love.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

When the enemy comes in like a flood, God raises up a standard against him (see Isaiah 59:19). This standard is the Word of life, the clarity and the purity of the Word of truth.

CONCLUSION

When we have love *for* God and the love *of* God, then we do not want to hurt Him. If we fail, we instantly use rebound by naming the sin and taking responsibility. As a result, God will bless us.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Who said this? Jesus did. It applies to all of us. Whatever we do, whatever part we play, we must be a part of a ministry that has this vision. God desires that we would gladly take up our cross and be diligent in everything we do. And in all of our diligence, He desires that we would never lose sight of the plumbline that is measuring our success: God’s Word illuminated by the

Holy Spirit that imparts resurrection life wherever it goes.

God wants everyone to face Him as a winner with the virtues and values He gives through His Word, the plumbline for every area of life.