

## STUDY UNIT 4

Heb. 12:1-2 / Rom. 8:28 / John 15:16

### THE PERSPECTIVES WE ALWAYS NEED

If Christianity is not true, then we of all people are to be most pitied (I Cor. 15:19) for we have wasted our short life here expecting better things to come. Rather than sacrifice and live for God and others in self-denial we should be seeking and choosing what is best for us in life.

Praise the Lord that His word is true, and our faith is not vain. Yet, the danger of living like it isn't—living for our own self-interest—is pervasive. So, unless we constantly take every thought captive to the hope that we have in Christ, the cost of living for Christ here, according to His commands, will sidetrack and defeat us.

*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. **See to it** that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Col. 2:6-8*

Let us therefore review the primary truths that God has given us regarding His plans and promises that we must continually impose on our minds and our earthly circumstances.

### THE MAJOR BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES WE ALWAYS NEED

#### 1. The Reason We Are Still Here

If I have trusted in Christ and am saved, why am I still here and not in heaven with my Lord? The bottom-line reason is this: God loves you! **He wants to share His life and saving work with you, along with the glory and rewards that go with it.** Notice how this is stated for us.

*“Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for **your reward in heaven is great**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matt. 5:11-12*

*“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in **filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.**” Col. 1:24*

Christ is building His church, but He is doing it through us!

*“I will build **My** church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”*

*Matt 16:18*

But....

*“**The whole body**, being fitted and held together **by that which every joint supplies**, according to the proper working of each individual part, (that includes YOU!) causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

*Eph 4:15-16*

Furthermore, we are exhorted...

*“**As each one has received a special gift, employ it** in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*

*1 Pet. 4:10-11*

Jesus declared that He was the light of the world while He was on the earth (John 9:5), but now...

*“**You** are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**”*

*Matt. 5:14-16*

Why are you still here? To be used of God, who does not need you, but wants to share His saving work of others with you because He loves you. (See also 1 Cor. 15:58, Gal.6:9, Heb. 12:3)

## **2. The Reasons That We Suffer**

There are a number of these that we must remember. We suffer as disciples of Christ because of

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1) Where We Live         | Gen. 3:17ff   |
| 2) Our Father’s Training | Heb. 12:8     |
| 3) Our Savior’s Work     | Phil. 1:27-30 |
| 4) Our Savior’s Glory    | Phil. 2:1-15  |

These are all important.

But there is another reason that is often not recognized by us until we are a good way down the road to spiritual maturity. Paul clarifies this as he describes his own suffering as an apostle:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction **so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**”*

*For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. **But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer*** 2 Cor 1:3-6

A Pastor was devastated by the sudden loss of his wife of 40 years. But, after a few months, he said that, surprisingly, it had enhanced his ministry to others in a way nothing else in his many years of serving Christ had. His sensitivity toward others in their suffering, and his ability to help them, was greater now than it had ever been. He said, holding back tears, that without the loss of his dear wife he would not be as useful as he is now. This is the perspective that Paul is describing above for himself. The affliction he suffered and the comfort he received in it from God was allowed to benefit others!

**So, let us remember** – why do I suffer as I serve Christ? For others. For others. For others. Thank you, Lord, for these hard things.

### **3. The Enabling Grace That We Must Have to Do What God Asks of Us**

The following verses, and many others, remind us that serving God as a disciple of Christ as He has commanded us is not hard...it is impossible in our own strength!

*“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for **every good work.**”* 2 Cor. 9:8

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* Eph. 2:10

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for **apart from Me you can do nothing.**”* John 15:4-5

*“I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**”* Phil. 4:12-13

**So let us remember** – by God’s enabling grace I can do all that He has prepared for me to do.

#### **4. The Enemies That We Face Every Day – And Must Resist**

We face 4 primary enemies in our work for Christ here, in this fallen world, awaiting His return. They are:

##### **1) Our Adversary, Satan and the fallen angels**

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”* Eph. 6:10-13

##### **2) Our Own Flesh, Our Fallen Nature**

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”* Gal. 5:16-17

##### **3) Our Fallen World, With Its Material, Sensual, And Relational Temptations**

*“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For **all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”* 1 John 2:15-17

##### **4) False Teachers and False Brethren in The Church**

*“There will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words.”* 2 Pet. 2:1-3

But....

*“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 delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, ungodly persons... who turn the grace of God into licentiousness.”* Jude 3-4

**So let us remember** – to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ, put to death the deeds of our flesh, contend earnestly for the faith, and to flee from the temptations of the world.

## 5. God's Providential Rule and Overrule

*“And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Rom. 8:28

*“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”* 1 Cor. 10:13

God never moves without purpose or plan  
When trying His servant and molding a man  
Give thanks to the Lord though your testing seems long  
In darkness He giveth a song

O Rejoice in the Lord  
He makes no mistake  
He knoweth the end of each path that I take  
For when I am tried  
And purified  
I shall come forth as gold

I could not see through the shadows ahead  
So I looked at the cross of my Savior instead  
I bowed to the will of the Master that day  
Then peace came and tears fled away

Now I can see testing comes from above  
God strengthens His children and purges in love  
My Father knows best, and I trust in His care  
Through purging more fruit I will bear

Ron Hamilton

**So let us remember** – that God takes the grievous things that come as we serve Him and turns them by His power into glory for Himself and those He loves. You.

## 6. Our Future Rewards and Exaltation

All Christians will stand at the Judgement Seat or Bema of Christ to give an account of their works for their Lord. (Eph. 2:10) This judgement is not to determine whether a person goes to heaven or hell. It is to reward them (or not) for their life as Christ's disciple. Christians are equally secure in Christ and have eternal life. The rewards given out at the Bema are only for those who already have eternal life. Some Christians will be rewarded at the Bema Seat for loving and serving their Savior well, some will suffer loss. This study clarifies why.

These rewards are described in Scripture as **crowns**, and five types of them are noted that will be given to various ones of the saints for their faithful service to our Lord.

### 1. The VICTOR'S CROWN

*“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable **crown**, but we **an imperishable one**. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim.”* 1 Cor. 9:24-27

This crown is to be given to those believers who have **lived a life of diligent self-control and perseverance** in serving Christ.

### 2. The CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me **the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* 2 Tim. 4:7-8

This crown is to be awarded to those who have **looked fervently for our Lord's coming** and have lived a life of perseverance in faithful service to Him.

### 3. The CROWN OF LIFE

*“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”* James 1:12

This crown is for those who **have suffered persecution for our Lord and triumphed over it, and for the many who have been martyred for their faith.**

### 4. The CROWN OF LIVING FOR AND REJOICING ABOUT OTHERS

*“But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while— in person, not in spirit— were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you— I, Paul, more than once— and yet Satan thwarted us.*

*For who is our hope or joy or **crown of exultation**? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”* 1 Thess. 2:17-20

This crown will be given to those who have **pursued and led others to Christ and disciplined others to maturity.** (See also Col. 2:1-2, Phil. 1:8, 23-27, 4:1)

## 5. The CROWN OF GLORY

*“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” 1 Pet. 5:1-4*

This crown is for **faithful Christian leaders, Pastors, teachers, and elders.**

**So, let us remember** – the promises of what is to come when our work for the Lord is finished.

### **MY ALWAYS NEEDED PERSPECTIVES SUMMARY**

1. Why am I still here? **God is sharing His life and work with me.**
2. Why do I suffer serving my Lord? **Others. My suffering is controlled by God and is designed to help me die to self and live for others.**
3. Can I live the Christian life in my own strength? No, but...**God gives me enabling grace for all He asks.**
4. I face invisible enemies. **Resisting, contending, avoiding, and abiding, in my walk, by the Word, and in the Spirit are necessary.**
5. God turns every grievous thing into glory for Himself and those He loves.
6. Is there hope for better things? O yes. **It is called Heaven. Come quickly Lord Jesus.**

## UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group discussion, read and study the preceding material and then complete the following self evaluation.

### Evaluating My Need Of God's Perspective

1. When I face an issue in life or have to make a decision, I seek God's opinion in the matter, using His Word or the principles He has given in His Word:  
 Usually  
 Always  
 Not Very Much  
 Hardly Ever
2. There are 6 reasons given in the study as to why God allows or brings suffering to a Christian. As I compare my **responses** to my own hurts and trials, I would give myself an overall grade of:  
 Good Job – well done in the past year  
 OK, but not great  
 Sometimes good, sometimes not so good  
 Not so good yet
3. The Christian life is a **relationship** with the indwelling Holy Spirit, who I cannot see, but who I am told works God's will for me, in me, and through me. I would rate my **DEPENDENCE** on the Holy Spirit in living my life as:  
 Intimate  
 Good Sometimes  
 Not much when the going gets tough  
 Distant  
 Not relevant
4. I am aware that Satan's common method of attack is to bring a thought to my mind that is a lie, deceptively disguised as a good thought. I would rate my "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" as:  
 Good  
 Ok  
 Poor
5. When I face something that is wrong, very hurtful, and even shocking that God would allow it to happen, I remember Romans 8:28 and thank Him that He will use it for my good:  
 Always  
 Eventually  
 Weakly  
 I don't, I am bitter



## **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. If the method of living the Christian life is “getting God’s perspective on a matter and imposing it on your soul and your circumstances”, how do we 1) go about getting God’s perspective? And how do we 2) then “impose” it on ourselves and our circumstances?
2. Now abide faith, hope, and love. (1 Cor. 13:13) What is our “hope” and how does it help us live for Christ?
3. What happens to a Christian who lives without seeking and heeding God’s perspectives?
4. What responsibilities do I have to help other Christians see God’s perspectives? Who am I responsible for in this regard? Practically, how can I help another person in this regard?
5. If a Christian forgets (or never really learns) why he or she is still here, facing their struggles in life, what will be the results? Has this happened to you?

## **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #2:**

In preparation for the second study session please consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. Go to the “My Always Needed Perspectives Summary” (page 33) at the end of this unit and choose one of the 5 Perspectives. Apply it every day this week to what you face. Be prepared to share what happened.
2. The Hymn in the section on “God’s Providential Rule and Overrule” was written by Ron Hamilton. He lost an eye as a young man and suffered physically in his last years. Find the music for this Hymn and sing it twice a day this study week. Apply it to yourself and praise the Lord. Memorize it if you can.
3. Pick one of the 4 Enemies mentioned, study the commands regarding how to respond to them, and being conscious of this battle all week, keep a journal of what you did.
4. Consider the following story and prepare your mind and heart to apply it regarding your worst “enemies.” Apply it.

“I know a mature, others oriented man of God who had been opposed by a Christian brother who had done him much harm. I was with him one day when he was asked to share his feelings about this brother by someone who had heard what had happened. His wonderful response was: “**Well he (the one who had wronged him), he has no idea what a blessing he has been to me.**” That was all he said, smiling.

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #2**

1. If you had an opportunity to pursue one of the application projects can you share with us how it went?

### **Prayer Together**