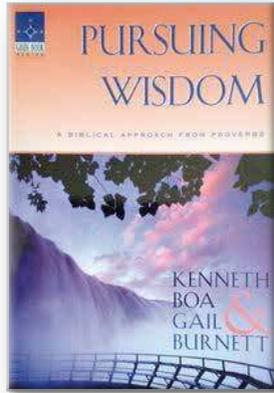


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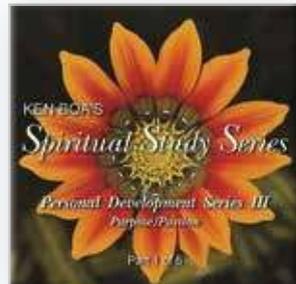
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REFLECTIONS

Reflections on God's revealed truth

THE PROMISES OF GOD

ONE-OF-A-KIND PART (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

Following its founding in 1903, the Ford Motor Company produced only a few cars each day. But by 1918, half of all the cars in America were the famed Model Ts, coming off the Ford assembly lines at an astonishing rate. A large factory was opened in 1910 that took advantage of precision manufacturing, interchangeable parts, and, by 1913, a continuously moving assembly line. The zenith of the company's revolutionary tactics was reached in 1927 when every step in the manufacturing process was integrated into a huge plant in Dearborn. Raw materials entered the plant in rail cars on one side and shiny new Fords rolled out the other side. Every part needed by Ford was manufactured in one place.

The mammoth Ford factory was needed in the early 1900s—no one else was making auto parts before cars existed! But now, things have changed. The major automobile manufacturers don't actually manufacture much of anything. They assemble parts that are manufactured elsewhere by others. From all over the world, car parts, made according to the exacting specifications of a master plan, are shipped to an assembly plant where they fit together perfectly to form a finished car.

Paul's description of the church of Jesus Christ is much like a modern auto assembly concept. God, as the master builder of the church, brings together the parts for His body from all over the world—"from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Those parts fit together perfectly to form a unit—"though they are many, they form one body"—and that unit then builds itself up and strengthens itself in love as each

new part is added (Eph. 4:16).

If you ever feel detached, disconnected from other Christians, just remember—you're not a human "part" looking for your purpose in life. If you are a believer in Christ, you are part of His body. And you are the exact part God designed you to be! (1 Cor. 12:18) So whether you're a tire (a foot), a motor (a heart), or a horn (a mouth)—rejoice! You are a one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable part of the body of Christ, on a one-way trip to eternity.

God's Promise to You:

"The body of Christ needs your unique contribution; I made no other parts like you."

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MAY 2015

Nothing can defeat
GOD'S PURPOSES

LORD OF ALL THINGS, Your sovereign will and purposes cannot be thwarted by human or demonic opposition. You revealed to Your prophets the things that were to come, and You have been working in history to bring these things to pass just as You predicted and promised. May I have a growing sense of confidence and assurance in all Your promises and rest in the realization that setbacks and opposition and disappointments will not defeat Your purposes for my life. I ask for a broader perspective that sees things in light of eternity and contextualizes the present in light of the ultimate future. May I have a zeal for the things that You have declared to be important and a desire for that which You want to accomplish through me for Your good pleasure. When I am anxious, I will give my burdens back to You and rest in Your assurances.

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Biblical teaching for
the heart and mind





THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL (PART 32)

Setting Your Flight Plan

Small aircraft pilots and charter pilots submit their flight plans to the Flight Service Station (FSS) that services their departure airport. The FSS enters the flight plan information into their system. The FSS is responsible for processing flight plans, which include the aircraft description and tail numbers, departure and destination airports, route of flight, estimated time of departure (ETD), estimated time of arrival (ETA) and number of people on board. The FSS keeps track of the airplane's ETA, with the pilot radioing in to report his or her position. If the pilot does not close the flight plan or communicate changes, a search and rescue procedure will be initiated, assuming the aircraft to be "lost."

Now, here's the interesting thing about all of this. If we do the math, we'll see that these aforementioned false goals lead to another kind of "lost." If we submit a flight plan to wisdom, reality, and spiritual fulfillment, but instead fly a course to pleasure, recognition, popularity, wealth, and power, what do we get? A fat lot of nothing. A futile pursuit. A life off course and out of control. "Ireland," if you will. We start off heading to the sunny Cal of a life in Christ and end up in the Dublin of doubt.

Speaking about doubt, Mel Gibson told Diane Sawyer in an interview that the idea for his movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, came to him during a personal struggle with self-destruction and despair.

"Let's face it, I've been to the pinnacle of what secular utopia has to offer. It's just this kind of 'everything.' I've got money, fame, this, that and the other, you know, and it's all been like, whoosh here, here you go, like that. And it's like, okay. And when I was younger, I got my proboscis

out and I dipped it into the font and sucked it up, alright. It didn't matter, there wasn't enough, it wasn't good enough. It's not good enough. It leaves you empty. The more you eat the emptier you get."

Mel Gibson's words only echo God's. A close look at the world around us, coupled with an intense look at Scripture, will tell us that these things lead to emptiness, and then to delusion, and finally to foolishness. No temporal thing can satisfy the human heart. Pursuit of earthly goals leaves you craving something more, because they're not enough in themselves. Pursue them, and you'll find you've given yourself to a lie. You've played out a false script, and you've bought into a wrong identity. You've inadvertently chosen delusion and foolishness. Scripture tells us that it's foolishness to put our own pursuits above God's plans for us, but we just keep on doing it. We are not autonomous, and we are fools when we believe that we are. On the other hand, an eternal value system is founded in and remains in *reality*, provides *fulfillment* and leads to *wisdom*. Let's build a flight plan around those variables and see where we land.

Departure Point: Reality

Many of us have hoped in things that have also died. It is a harsh reality of life, death. It comes sneaking up on us with absolutely no warning and can change our reality. What we thought was tangible and constant turns into a memory, leaving us grasping for a constant thought of that person, so as to make him real and living again. With every loss comes another slap in the face from that old foe mortality.

From the dawn of time, it has been human nature to want to hold onto life. The serpent in the Garden of Eden tempted Eve with the lie that

life could be controlled, and she took the bait. "If you eat it *now* you will become wise and never die!" This arrogant choice, as you may know, only brought her pain and a deeper understanding of death. Her unhealthy curiosity became her sad reality, and she came to understand what it meant to "pass away."

I John 2:17 tells us how to invest our life in what will *not* pass. John reminds us that many things in this world will pass away and not carry over to the world to come. But the one who does the will of God abides forever. *Our* reality is preparatory to the invisible kingdom which is to

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come and lasts forever. This world is, very simply, a womb which is preparing us for that new life. Understanding the temporal nature of the world will help us live in the reality of it.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3

This is a living hope, a hope that will not die. First of all, this hope is imperishable. Secondly, it's undefiled; it can't be corrupted. Third, it will not fade away. And, fourth, it's reserved in heaven for you. You have a reserved seat. What a wonderful contrast! *That's* realty. *That's* the thing which will endure forever. Therefore, a man is wise who gives his life in exchange for what God says is permanent and valuable. A man is foolish who gives his life in exchange for things God says are despicable and worthless.

Cruising Altitude: Fulfillment

What are the things that people long for, really? When they go after people's approval, what do they really want? When they go after power, what do they really crave? Think about the people you know who are trying to control, trying to gain power. What drives them to it? What do you think they hope to get? Whether people will admit it or not, all fulfillments in life are summed up with nine surprising words: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The fruit of the Spirit. It's all there.

Look at the list. Even if you just take the first three, that would be enough for most people. Those three things describe most, if not all, of what most desire. Fulfillment is found in love, and in joy, and in peace. Many people who seek wealth and power suppose that when they get them they'll be satisfied, but neither wealth nor power really even promise to ever bear us this fruit. And when we look deep down, we find that we desire these real things much more, anyway. We think we want those other things, but what we really crave is to be loved, to be content, and to live in peace with our reality.



CHANCE OR DANCE?

Is it chance or dance moves the world?

Is the world blind and dumb or bloom, festal? A vain jest, or holy feast?

—Eugene Warren, "Christographia XIV"

Our perspective on life, whether temporal or eternal, will determine the set of rules by which we play, the standards and character we pursue, the source of our hope, and the difference between obedience and disobedience to God's precepts and principles.

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