Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Mt 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Mt 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Mr 10:27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

Lu 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Lu 17:1 ¶ Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

Lu 18:27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

**Lu 14:26** If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he **cannot** **be** **my** **disciple**.

**Lu 14:27** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, **cannot** **be** **my** **disciple**.

**Lu 14:33** So likewise, whosoever he **be** of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he **cannot** **be** **my** **disciple**.

1. Expecting FAITH in impossible situations (absolutely not possible any other way) from those that are willing to diligently seek Him.
   1. Jesus provides perfect faith for His disciples

Heb 6:1 ¶ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Php 3:9 ¶ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Ro 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Ro 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Ro 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

Ro 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

Ga 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

* 1. Jesus expects perfect faith from His disciples.

Luke 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

* 1. Let your developing faith develop your person, not your person develop your faith.

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

1Th 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Jas 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

* + 1. Most important of all, “How do we measure up to perfect faith in Christ?” Get ready to be challenged, maybe like you’ve never been challenged before.

Luke 14:25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple.

It’s apparent that Jesus suspects that some of the people in the “large crowds” who “are traveling with” Him aren’t up to the task. So, instead of letting them be deceived or make a commitment without really knowing what the commitment is, Jesus tells them the way it is.

In verse 27 He says this: “If you want to be one of my disciples, you have to hate your mom, dad, spouse, kids, brothers and sisters. Oh, and you have to hate your own life as well!”

serious about making the biggest decision that they’ll ever make.

But what does He mean when He uses the word “hate.” Is He literally saying that we have to hate all of the most important people in the world to us? And if He is, why does God tell husbands that they have to love their wives (Eph 5:25) and that we have to love our neighbor as ourselves (James 2:8)?

Logic, common sense and context all tell us that Jesus doesn’t mean that we should despise all of these people. The idea here is comparative love. “I love my spouse with every ounce of my being, but compared to how much I love Jesus, well, there’s no comparison.”

The idea here is that we’re called to love Jesus more than our spouses and more than our kids and more than our parents and more than our brothers and sisters and more than ourselves. We still love all of those people, but our love for them is much less than our love of Jesus.

Here’s what Jesus is saying: “If you want to be my disciple, I have to be number one in your life, bar none. Period. Case closed. You either love me more than anyone else on the planet or you can’t be my disciple.”

Needless to say, this is a shocking thing for Jesus to say, but if we think about it, it makes sense.

Matt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

The idea here—a life principle—is this: we can only serve one master, not two. I used to work for a woman who, on paper, reported to two people in two different organizations. That may sound good in theory, but only one of the organizations paid her check. Guess who her ultimate loyalty was to?

This principle of serving one master is also true in the spiritual realm. If I love my wife or kids or anyone else more than Jesus, then they’re my master, not Jesus. If they have my heart, then I serve them. If they have my undying attention and commitment, then I can say that Jesus is my master all I want, but it’s not true. My master is whomever—or whatever—I love the most. And if it’s not Jesus, then, well, I’ve made my decision. I’ve chosen, because of my divided loyalties, to not be His disciple.

And just in case we think that this is a just a temporary thing, the moment in time that we believed in Jesus and was baptized, the word “hate” is in the present tense, so this is an ongoing thing. Putting Jesus first never stops. This is how it is for eternity. This is how is has to be. Otherwise, we can’t be His disciple.

While this expectation may seem foreign to us—even unreasonable—it reflected real life to the people Jesus is traveling with. Any Jew who chose to follow Jesus to this degree—to really follow Jesus—would be kicked out of his or her synagogue, rejected by immediate family, and generally shunned by peers. Rejection and persecution would become an everyday way of life for them. So yes, choosing to follow Jesus did basically turn all of their existing relationships up side down

Jim Denison is a pastor at a church in Texas, and he likes to tell the story about going on a missionary trip as a college student to East Malaysia. While there, he attended a worship service and a teenage girl was baptized. After the service, Denison saw some luggage in the corner of the church and asked why it was there. The luggage, he was told, was the teenage girl’s. She brought it to church that morning because her father told her that if she ever became a Christian she couldn’t go back home.

If we think verses 25-26 are tough to swallow, unfortunately it doesn’t get any easier. In fact, Jesus’ expectations get even higher verse 27.

Luke 14:27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

When Jesus uses that phrase, “carry his cross,” those traveling with Him know exactly what He’s referring to: People who carry their crosses on the way to being crucified. Crucifixion was a very common thing after the Romans took control of Israel. Crucifixion meant public humiliation, the worst pain imaginable, and an agonizingly slow death.

So not only are Jesus “disciples” called to make Jesus a priority in terms of relationships, they should be prepared to sacrifice and suffer, even to the point of death. Once again, while is hard for 21st century American Christians to identify with, this reflected reality for those who are traveling with Jesus. Intense persecution, suffering and even martyrdom faced first century Christians.

* What does Jesus expect from His disciples?
* What does He expect from people who call themselves Christians?
* What does He look for when it comes to His followers?

Put Jesus first and do whatever He wants.

Jesus wants to solve this problem of undedicated and uncommitted people following Him, so He makes a point of raising the bar, and makes no secret of it. The reality is the bar’s at our chin and higher for most of us, not six inches off the ground.

Getting saved is easy—that is, it’s a free gift from God and we don’t have to earn or do anything to deserve it.  We simply respond to the grace of God. However, once we’re in the kingdom of God, Jesus has very high expectations of those of us who are His disciples.

When man was put upon the earth he was told to be fruitful, to replenish the earth, to subdue it. His first responsibility upon the earth (his only responsibility when he was first here) was to “care for the garden,” to take care of the earth, to make sure that the earth was properly nurtured and properly supervised. The essence of that command still exists. Man still has the responsibility to take care of this beautiful creation that God has given us. Much of the suffering and tragedy man experiences is because he has not discharged this responsibility.

Man’s persistence in polluting the water, for example, has caused disease and other problems which in some cases have been tragic. Man’s unwise use of the land has caused floods and tornadoes that have brought great tragedy and great suffering upon man. When we violate the natural environment that God has given us, we cannot expect God not to allow the consequences of this violation to occur. We know that emphysema and some of the other diseases that we have come in contact with have been caused, at least in some cases, by our violation of the air that God has given us originally in a state that did not cause these things. We have evidence that even leukemia may be related to man’s indiscriminate use of nuclear energy.

Another aspect of the problem of suffering is seen when we fail to heed the warnings of nature and thus reap the consequences. I think there are many classic illustrations of this. In California, for example, there is an area near Los Angeles where the earth is under great stress, and where there are a tremendous number of cracks, or faults as they are called. Geologists have warned the builders in that area that this is a place where they need to be extremely careful not to construct tall buildings and that they should not build structures that are sensitive to earthquakes and to cracks and shifting of the earth. Yet there was a building constructed to replace a hospital that was knocked down by an earthquake earlier. This building was to be sixteen stories tall and had no earthquake provisions of any real consequence in it. It was being partially financed by the federal government, and was straddling the very fault that knocked down the hospital that it was replacing. Now I would like you to think for a minute, who will get the blame when an earthquake rolls through that area, knocking down the brand new hospital and perhaps killing millions of people, including everybody in the hospital? Well, I will guarantee you that there will be those people who will say, “If there was a God that wouldn’t have happened.” And yet the warning is there. If you build your house in the mouth of a volcano, it does not seem to me that you have too much to complain about when it erupts. A surprising amount of the problems we have fall into these categories that we have briefly examined.

But on the other hand I opened this discussion by reading to you a passage from the ninth chapter of John, which describes a situation that does not fall in this category. Jesus was passing by, the Bible tells us in John 9:1 – 3, and He saw a man who was blind from his birth, born without sight. Now His disciples asked Him the typical question. They said, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” It was their conviction that the problems that the man had were a result of man’s sin, which in some cases is correct. But notice what Jesus said in the third verse: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Jesus said it was not because this man sinned or not even because his parents sinned that he was born blind. It was not sin that did it. It was not that this man abused his body; it was not that this man abused his environment; it was not that this man failed to heed the warnings of his environment. Jesus said it was that the works of God should be made manifest in him. Before we conclude I want to explain to you what I think that means.

First let us take a look at a few points that are related to this type of problem, at least in an indirect way. Let us see if we can make some sense of some of the things that you and I experience: some of the things that come our way in life that we sometimes find somewhat difficult to explain, or somewhat difficult to rationalize, or to work out in our own minds. There are some, for example, who suggest to us that pain is something that should not occur if there is a God. And yet, physical pain and other types of pain are absolutely necessary if we are to survive in a physical way. There was a story in *Reader’s Digest* about a little boy in India who was born without the nerve endings of the extremities of his body connected to his brain. In simple terms, this child could not experience physical pain. Now you know, we might think that would be marvelous never to have a stubbed toe, a headache, a backache, or all the other aches and pains that bother all of us. But this is a very tragic, unpleasant story. This little boy was about 10 or 11 months old, just beginning to walk around hanging onto things, when his mother was kneading bread over on the counter and smelled the odor of burning human flesh. She turned and saw her little boy with his hands on the hot furnace in the center of the room, and the doctors were just barely able to save his hands by skin grafting. You see, that child could not know that the furnace was hot, and the natural reflex built into each of us was not operative in this child. Consequently he was not protected by experiencing normal pain. Any normal child would probably have never touched the thing, and if he had he would have jerked away immediately. He would have experienced pain. He would have screamed and would have gotten help immediately without a serious burn. But this child did not have that protection. A few months later the child came in one day and collapsed in the doorway of the hut, and when the mother picked him up she noticed his foot was badly cut and he had an obvious loss of blood. Once again his life was saved by transfusions but you see his body could not say to his brain, “You’ve been hurt! Get help! You need attention quickly.” We need physical pain. The tragic end of the story came when the child was barely eight years old. He came in one day and laid down on the mat in the corner of the hut as is the custom in that country. The mother went over to check on him a few minutes later and found he was dead. An autopsy revealed he had died of a ruptured appendix. You see his body could not say to his brain, “You’re sick. You need help. You’re in trouble.” Consequently, survival was not possible.

The writer says in Psalm 139:14, “I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Indeed this physical body that I live in, ugly as it may be on the outside, is a marvelous machine — and if properly cared for might run as long as a hundred years without a valve job or a new transmission or even a change in oil. (Some of us may sometimes feel like we need a new transmission, but the fact of the matter is that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.) Physical pain is a part of being fearfully and wonderfully made; physical pain is that which protects us and enables us to survive in the environment in which we live.

I would like to suggest to you further that this same type of thing is true in the emotional sense. What kind of man would it be who could not experience guilt, sympathy, and compassion and who could not relate to the needs of fellow human beings? We have had some famous people who were like this. They wear names like Hitler, Mussolini, and Eichman — men who could watch innocent men, women, and children by the tens of thousands walk to their death in the gas chamber and apparently not be moved. These men apparently were not able to feel sympathy, compassion, or guilt in any way.

be sympathetic and compassionate, who can move into people’s lives and try to help them

lessons from one time or another of the value of pain and suffering in people’s lives. I think that it would be important for us here to make just a comment along these lines, even though it is a point you have undoubtedly heard. I think perhaps the best illustration that I have heard is a very old story but one that illustrates the point very well. There were five brothers out west somewhere who at one time had attended the services of the Church, but had become indifferent because of lack of involvement They were not in attendance, not faithful, and were completely inactive. The story goes that at one time the oldest brother, John, was out behind the barn and he got bit on the arm by a rattlesnake. Of course the other brothers were greatly concerned. They called the elders and the preacher and anybody else they could get to pray for John. They made all kinds of promises of the things they were going to do. It was not too long until John began to recover. As he recovered, he reflected upon his condition and his rejection of God and his lack of involvement and the fact that he had not been faithful to the Lord. So he turned away from the kind of life he had been living, and he came back to God. He got involved in the work program of the Church, and became a very active, very dedicated Christian. The story goes that one Sunday the preacher, in the process of a prayer, said, “Lord send us four more rattlesnakes that we may reach John’s four brothers.”

I am sure that no preacher would want to bring that kind of pain and suffering into a man’s life, but the fact of the matter is that sometimes it takes pain, sometimes it takes suffering, sometimes it takes a tragedy to make us realize that we need God. Pain humbles us. Somebody has said, “Humility is a funny thing. Just when you think you have it, you’ve lost it.” Certainly that is true in 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul said, “… lest I should be exalted above measure … , there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” The apostle Paul apparently had a problem. The pain and suffering (the thorn in the flesh, whatever it was) helped Paul. It helped him overcome any sense of egotism that might have been part of his life. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to make us realize we are not self-sufficient. Sometimes it takes a disease to make us realize that no matter how much money we have, no matter how vocal we are, no matter how many friends we have, no matter what our situation in life might be, that sometimes there is no one who can help us but God. “… Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).

The last point that I wish to make in our discussion is probably the most important point — a point that I think each of us needs to think about very, very seriously and understand very completely — especially as far as the Christian’s situation connected with pain and suffering is concerned. The point deals most precisely with the passage of Scripture from John 9:1– 3 that we read earlier in our discussion. Every now and then, I will discuss this subject with someone who will say, “Well, if God were real and if everything was as you say it is, then certainly Christians following God’s system would not have to experience pain and suffering.” I think if we consider that point of view for a few minutes we see that obviously this is not a realistic position for a number of reasons.

First of all, if becoming a Christian would automatically unravel all the various problems that confront a person in life, then we would have people flocking to religion to get away from their problems. The way it is, there are some people using religion as an escape mechanism when that is not what God intended. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not out of fear. It would be unreal and unrealistic for us to really believe that somehow being a Christian ought to exempt us from the problems that other people have to endure.

But I think even far more fundamental and far more important than this is the fact that if Christians did not suffer, they would be totally and completely incapable of doing what they were put here to do. God intends for His followers to communicate with the world, to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of people. You cannot communicate with a man unless you are enduring or have endured some of the same things that he has endured. As a matter of fact, I believe that the bad experiences that you and I have to put up with and that we all undergo from time to time are actually talents. They are actually things that enable us to communicate with our fellow man and meet his needs. I hope you will pardon this very personal reference but I do not really know any other way to present what I am trying to say here than to show you in my own life what God has done and how things have worked to His glory.

Some years ago my wife and I decided that as a part of service to the Lord we would adopt some children. We wanted to raise these children in a Christian home. We wanted to love them as any parent loves their children, and help them find the happiness and joy that we have found in Christ in our marriage together. We made the proper arrangements, and in a very short period of time, we were allowed to bring home a little boy as our own son. We were very, very happy. We named him Timothy, because I had great dreams for this young man. It was my sincere hope and prayer that this child might develop to be a great gospel preacher like the Timothy I read about in the Bible, that he might be able to do what I knew his daddy would never be able to do because of his background, his lack of training, and his ability. We had this child for about six months when we began to recognize that something was not developing normally in the child.

One day we took the child to a doctor. When the doctor examined the baby he said, “Mr. and Mrs. Clayton, I hate to tell you this, but your child is blind. He can’t see. He’s got congenital cataracts and not only that, it also appears that there will probably be other difficulties. This child is apparently a rubella child. His mother apparently had German measles (rubella) during the pregnancy and he may have a heart defect. He will probably be retarded. There are a variety of things that could be wrong. As a medical doctor, I must advise you to put this child away in an institution, get another baby, and forget about him.” We had had this child for about six months. He was as much our child as any child is anybody’s child. You can imagine the kind of impact that this had on a man who had been a Christian a very short time. That night we went out for a drive. While my wife went in to get something at a shopping center, I can remember sitting in the car holding this little baby in my arms, looking into that little face I had grown to love, and saying to God over and over, “Why Lord, why? Why would you do this to me? After I’ve come out of atheism: After I’ve sacrificed everything I know to sacrifice. After I’ve done everything I know to do, why would you do this to me?”

The answer did not come right away. We went through an agonizing period of time. Many people tried to tell us that we ought to institutionalize the child, and sometimes this is necessary. There are times when the best thing for the child, the best thing for the parents, and the best thing for all concerned is to institutionalize a child that has problems that cannot be met satisfactorily in a home situation. But we did not know what this child’s situation was. I kept reading passages like John 9, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” I read passages that said that “ … all things work together for good to them that love God …” (Romans 8:28). There had to be a reason for this! There had to be some kind of understanding that I could get that would make me realize why this thing had happened!

We determined that at least until we knew what the child’s situation was, we had to stick this thing out. People who did not share our convictions tried to influence us to wash our hands of the situation. We went through numerous surgeries on the baby’s eyes, but after many attempts, doctors finally gave up. Tim is totally blind. Later, we found that the child had a mixture of cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy which has been an increasing struggle for all of us, but Tim has achieved a great deal and is a contributing member of our society. I suppose that even during these years when we were going through all of this, I began to recognize some value in what had happened. Certainly, my wife and I were closer as man and wife because we had endured this thing together. We had to support each other and help each other through the problem. By having had this somewhat abnormal situation I am sure that we appreciate our so-called normal children (if any child is normal) a whole lot more.

But the real significance of this passage in John 9 which we have been talking about, and the real significance of what had happened, did not occur to me until a friend in Pontiac, Michigan, wrote me and said, “John, there is a young man and his wife here that have a baby with essentially the same difficulties that your Timmy has and I don’t know what to say to them. They are distraught and talking about leaving the Lord. I wondered if you would write them a letter explaining to them what has happened to you, and if you would perhaps help them in some way.” I must confess that his letter made me angry. I did not want to do it. I stuck the letter in the desk and had no intention of writing anything to anybody about a situation like this. But I guess my conscience bothered me, and I did not want him writing me another letter. Finally one night I sat down with the intent of writing a sentence or two to these people to get my responsibility over with. I wrote a sentence or two, and then I wrote another paragraph, and then another page, and another page. I do not really remember how many pages I wrote, but I wrote them an extremely long letter — almost a small book. You see, I could say to these people, “Now look, I know what you are going through because I’ve been over that road.” Most of you have not had that experience. I hope you never do. It is a terrible thing to look at a child that you have planned great things for, that you love very much, and realize that nothing that you had dreamed about can really come true. It is a terrible thing, but it is something that I have been through and I could say to this young man and this young woman, “I know how you feel. You can have great joy and a great blessing in this thing.”

Because of this experience, I began to realize that I had a talent. I had an ability. I had an opportunity to relate to people to whom no one else in my immediate area could relate. A couple months later when I was in New York I met an elder in the Church who had a Mongoloid (Down syndrome) child. I could relate to him. I could help him realize that there were others who shared his burden and his problem. Sometime later in my own congregation a family that we loved very much had a child born with the same problem. Once again we could help, advise, and relate to their needs. We could help them get programs that were useful to them and to their child. You see I have a talent and an ability that nobody else has in my immediate area — to relate to people and to bring Christ into the lives of people who are experiencing this kind of difficulty.

But I cannot go to a man who has lost his father and say I know how you feel, because at this time I do not. I cannot go to a man who has lost his mother, his child, his brother, or his sister and meet his needs because I have not had those experiences. I cannot go to a teenager who has divorced parents and say I know how you feel, because I do not. I do not have the slightest idea how they feel. But some of you do. Some of you have had these experiences, and you have weathered the storm. You can go to people and relate to their needs. You can help them through their difficulties. You have a talent. What are you doing with that talent?

One time a young lady, a Red Cross nurse, was in Pennsylvania when a terrible train wreck occurred. People were injured, bleeding, and dying everywhere. She came before other medical help arrived, and began to meet the needs of these people the best she could. One of the first people she saw was a man in a business suit walking around in a state of shock saying over and over again, “My instruments, my instruments! If only I had my instruments!” She administered to his needs, and got him out of his state of shock. As she turned to leave him she said to him, “Sir, I just wondered if you could tell me something. As you saw all these terrible injuries you kept walking around saying, ‘My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my instruments!’ What was going through your mind?” The man stood up and said to her, “Young lady, I better introduce myself.” He told her his name. He said that he was a head surgeon in a hospital near there, and all he could think of as he looked around and saw all these terrible injuries was that if only he had his surgical tools (his instruments), he could help meet these people’s needs and bring relief to their pain and suffering.

My friend, I wonder how many times God in heaven looks down at the problems this earth has, looks at you and looks at me and says, “My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my instruments!”

Are you an instrument of God? You need to answer that for yourself right now. Are you an instrument of God? Are you a tool of the Lord bringing joy, peace, and relief into the lives of people? Or are you a part of the problem bringing pain and despair because of your lack of involvement? You cannot be an instrument of God unless you are forged according to God’s plan. The blacksmith cannot make an ax unless he uses a plan or a pattern. God said you must believe in Him. Do you believe? Are you willing to admit this belief, which we call confession? Are you willing to live God’s system and repent and turn away from the world’s way of life? Are you willing to be forged in God’s system by being buried in water in baptism for the remission of your sins to become an instrument of God? Then, as an instrument of God, use your talents and your abilities to bring joy, relief, peace, love, and understanding into a world so desperately in need of these things?

There are some of you who undoubtedly have been instruments of God at one time. But you are just like the ax that the blacksmith made. When he finished making it, it was beautiful, shiny, and new. Then somebody left it in the garden and it has been unused and been exposed to the elements and the forces of this world. Just like that ax, you have become rusty, corroded, something that nobody wants to have anything to do with, despicable because you are no longer a beautiful, shiny, clean useful instrument of God. Will you be an instrument of God? Will you be a part of the Lord’s work? If you will be an instrument of God and if you will follow God’s system you have the greatest promise that can be made to a person considering human suffering and pain and death. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there by any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Be an instrument of God!