

## CHAPTER 11

### Abiding in the Blessing

For as long as I can remember, I had a belief that God could and did guide. I really enjoyed the Quaker stories of people's experience of God's guidance that I heard as a child, but I experienced very little of His guidance until after I went through four years of agony. What happened was this I decided that I would like a wife so I had a look around and was attracted to a young Christian girl. I prayed that if it was right, she would turn up at a particular meeting. You can imagine how my heart thumped when she did turn up. She was not attracted to me however and so no friendship developed. This was shattering for me and one of the reasons I went into a spiritual wilderness. You see, I thought I was working on Gideon's fleece principle, but I was not and only years later I realised the difference. Gideon's fleece spoken of in Judges 6v36-40 was looking for confirmation from God to do something that he felt God wanted him to do but he did not want to do. It was only a long time later after much pain that I realized that the fleece Gideon asked for was something which was very unlikely to happen while my fleece was asking for a circumstance which had a reasonable probability of happening anyway. It was also that I wanted confirmation for something that I wanted to have happen, but before I came to this it was a time of spiritual dispare, a dark tunnel to walk through.

To recap this guidance disaster happened nearly 10 years after I had made my decision to accept and confess Jesus as Lord, of these I had been involved for several years in leadership of the Inter Varsity Christian Union as prayer secretary and vice chairman including leading Bible Studies and preaching in local churches as well as witness to my commitment to Jesus Christ in Quaker Meetings. To put it lightly I was shattered when I received the letter in with the words "I honestly don't feel that we are in a position get to know each other better, considering that all my friends are round here. So I would rather think of you as an older friend who I can look up to as a really sincere Christian.....I hope that you will accept this reply and realize that I have considered this matter with God".

The way back was slow and painful, I started asking what is the know will of God, and saw how it was set out in Matt 25:31-46 quoting from verse 34 "Then the king will say to those on his right hand, Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me

food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and in prison and you came to me.’ And then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give the drink? And when did we see thee as a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee? And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ What came to me was to visit my old Aunt Isabel Douglas who was in Hospital to do what I knew to be God’s will. On the first few visits she just pulled a newspaper over her face and that was the end of visit, I spoke to my mother about this and she to the doctors and the medication was changed and the visits became more normal. She was virtually bed ridden following a compound fracture of her leg, it was not discovered immediately and she was in pain for a long time.. She was not someone I had much spiritual affinity with nor she with Evangelical Christianity. The best I could do was to keep her wind up French movement clock going, by turning the face to balance the tick tock, so that it chimed out the hours of the night for her. She had been a Junior School Head mistress Teacher for over 40 years and continued as “teacher”, things had to be done her way. Even though she was revolutionary when she started Rathgar Junior School about 1920 with the concept that “Children should enjoy school” For a few years I visited nearly every week usually on Sunday Afternoons. In December 1971 she wrote to me for reading on the way to America to visit Marge“ Charles I wonder if you have any idea of the appreciation I have had and continue to have, and for all the help, care and thought you have given me, especially during 1971. Your Cheery visits, unexpected but always welcome to the Adelaide where sometimes I was near despair- Those totally unexpected visits on those long lonely evenings in Killiney and Greystones when I could hear with gladness “Hello Auntie” We very rarely spoke on what might be termed “religion” but often after you had gone I almost always heard myself saying “Practical Christianity”. It was not only what you did but the Christ like way you brought courage and love, which seemed to me was very near to the way Christ brought help cheer and hope to those over anxious, suffering human beings whom he met as he walked the roads of Palestine....A. Prayer “Grant us the courage and power necessary to live according to your will”

It was only after this shattering experience was healed through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that I saw that guidance is made up of a number of factors;

1. The peace of God in our hearts (Col. 3v15)
2. The witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8v14)
3. The teaching of Jesus found in the Scriptures
4. Circumstances

Anyone of these alone can be dangerous to base decisions on. Let us consider them in turn.

1. THEPEACEOFGOD: In John 14v27, Jesus promises us peace that the world cannot give. Paul says, "Let the peace of God rule in your heart." (Col. 3v15) The peace of God is not shutting everything out like an ostrich with its head in the sand, or entering a 'trance' state of mind as in some eastern religious groups; the peace of God comes from a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It comes from abiding in Him. "In Me you will have peace," said Jesus. "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." (John 16v33) Yes, Jesus wants us to know the depth of His peace within our hearts. Indeed, His peace is one of the surest forms of guidance, I believe. It is difficult for us to know the true will of God unless we know the peace of God in our hearts. True peace comes from acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord and being obedient to what He shows us to do.

It means offering the apology here, making restitution there for the wrongs we have done. In other words, repenting and really putting Christ first in our lives and accepting the forgiveness that Jesus won for us on the cross. As we meditate on the things that are lovely, the things that are good; as we meditate on the Scriptures and allow that same Spirit to open our hearts to God's living word for us today, put into practice what He shows us to do for the glory of Jesus Christ, we will know God's peace and step forth with confidence in the decisions of life. If we are not right with God, the only safe thing to do is to repent and be reconciled to Him. Indeed, the only safe place to be is in the place where He wants us to be. Anywhere else is dangerous.

I have done a lot of driving in the last few years on the twisty roads of Ireland and I am conscious that one is only on the road in the comfort of the car until one fails to take the next corner! (I thank God this has not happened to me!) It is not pleasant to be in a crash; it is a shock, a loss of peace and comfort. In the same way it is not pleasant or comfortable to be outside the will of God. Once we have known God's peace we miss it when we lose it. Peace however, is subjective and not objective and therefore peace alone is not enough.

2. THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Yes, the Holy Spirit does lead in dreams, visions, gentle nudges, prophecy and the still small voice; but it is vitally important to realise that the Holy Spirit (the third person of the Trinity) always brings glory to God. (John 19v26 & 16v12-15)

There are different types of prophecy for example: (a) The warning type (b) The directive type. (a) The warning type: This is similar to the many old testament prophecies. There is a warning that people are out of the known will of *God*, a call to repentance and acknowledging God and a warning of what will happen if they don't. This type of prophecy should be considered carefully and if it is in line with the known will of God in Scripture, taken very seriously indeed. A good example of this type of prophecy being heeded is given in the book "The Happiest People on Earth" by Demos

Shakerian. The Armenians were warned that a great persecution was coming and if they did not flee, their lives would be lost. Sadly many people did not heed that warning and were massacred. I know of a case in Ireland where a warning was given to 'openly and unashamedly acknowledge the lord'. The warning that followed went unheeded and trust was put in the ability of a man with all the 'right answers'. Disaster followed. We must not take lightly the warnings of the lord.

(a) Directive prophesy: This is the type of prophesy where a person is directed to do something by another person. This type of prophecy should be carefully weighed:

(1) Is it in line with the known will of God in Scripture?

(2) Is the person who gave the prophecy a respected person in the Lord? Have they a vested interest in the outcome of the prophecy? (this could be a danger sign). .

(3) Is it something that the Lord has been speaking to us about before? If not, the safest thing to do is to do what Mary did (Lk.2v19) and ponder things in one's heart. We should not run off and do something because of an unconfirmed prophecy. I was praying for a young person one night and felt to pray that the Lord would bless her overseas. I hesitated and then prayed aloud. Afterwards I said, "If this is the first you've thought about going overseas, then forget about it; if you have been thinking of going, then take this as a confirmation from the Lord. (A friend later told me this person had been thinking of going abroad.) I feel that personal prophecy usually comes as a confirmation of something the Lord has already been speaking to us about in our hearts. Personal prophecy was very helpful to us in our marriage to help bring us closer in the vision of unity the Lord had for us.

Visions and Interpretations: A vision is basically a picture which comes to our mind; sometimes an interpretation comes with it. For example, I remember the picture that flashed across my mind as we were praising God at the F.G.B.M.F.I. 1980 All-Ireland Convention. It was of the map of Europe and a light shining out from Ireland right across Europe. I realised afresh that the Lord was desiring that His glory would shine out from the unity of His people in Ireland and reach across Europe and on to Russia. How many people in Europe do not believe in God because of the propaganda put forth that Christianity is no good; that God is dead just because of the scandal of supposedly Christian people in Ireland fighting each other. Missionaries may go out, but I feel that unless Catholics and Protestants go out together seeking only the glory of Jesus Christ, and demonstrate what God can do in these days, there will not be a breakthrough to the 95% of the population in Europe who seldom or never go to church. Like other forms of guidance, visions and interpretations should be weighed and their 'rightness' or 'otherwise' be discerned.

3. THE TEACHING OF JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURE: When we are considering guidance it is essential that we realise that **the Holy Spirit will never guide contrary** to what Jesus said and **taught**. However, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.:5,6, 7) raised the standard from that in the Old Testament. For example, instead of hating your enemies, Jesus said "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt. 5v43,

44) . We are told to run the race set before us looking unto Jesus the author of our faith  
Hebrews 12:2 The appendix at the bottom of this chapter explains why it is important to look to Jesus the Word of God made flesh in whom was life and that life the light of the world. It is important that we do not look back return to Old Testament ways, remember how Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.

In a similar way, the Holy Spirit has convicted men to live to a higher standard down through centuries. An example of this was the Quaker, John Woolman (1720-1772) who was convicted that slavery was wrong when he was asked to write a bill of sale for a slave. The Holy Spirit in his lifetime enabled him to liberate Quaker slave owners from having slaves in America. The importance of Scripture has been dealt with in other chapters in particular in reference points section of chapter fifteen and it is not necessary to deal with it further here.

4. CIRCUMSTANCES: Just because the way is open to do something, does not make it right. The opportunity to steal, for example, does not make stealing right. God does however, guide at times by opening doors and closing doors. Just remember: **God's Spirit will not lead us contrary to what Jesus said and taught.**

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF GUIDANCE IS TO BE WILLING FOR GOD'S WILL. We cannot manipulate God's purpose. We can co-operate with what God is doing and have plenty to rejoice and be glad about, or get out of God's blessing. (James 4v10)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths." (Prov.3v5,6)

As you go step by step, the Lord will open up the way before you.

## Appendix

### Introduction

The aim of this document, is to be made clean by the word Jesus spoke<sup>1</sup>, **his words are in red, other words from the New Testament are in blue, words from the Old Testament are in green** and the words of this editor in black. Where the apostles confirm the message of Jesus in their epistles these are in magenta.

### The Word of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.<sup>2</sup> The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, we beheld his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father<sup>3</sup>

### Jesus Christ the Word of God

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<sup>1</sup> John 15:3

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1-2

<sup>3</sup> John 1:14-

While the law was given through Moses Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who had glory as the only Son from the Father, the word that became flesh and dwelt among us<sup>5</sup>. Yes while God in times past had spoken by the prophets he chose to speak by his son<sup>6</sup>, Jesus came that we might have life ζωην and have it more abundantly.<sup>7</sup> In him was lifeζωην and the life ζωην was the light of human beings<sup>8</sup>, indeed light to enlighten everyone coming into the world.<sup>9</sup> Light that has never been put out by the darkness<sup>10</sup>.

Jesus proclaimed Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand,<sup>11</sup> come follow me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and I will give you rest<sup>12</sup>.

He came because of the Love of God,<sup>13</sup> he loved, as the Father love him<sup>14</sup>, he shared as a friend all that his Father had made known to him<sup>15</sup> that we can abide in his love by following his instructions just as he followed his Father's instructions and abode in his love.<sup>16</sup> In other words live in the refreshing flow of the Love of God

**For God is light and in him is no darkness at all<sup>17</sup> Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, yourselves prove<sup>18</sup> being careful lest the light in you is darkness<sup>19</sup>, for if the light is darkness how great is that darkness<sup>20</sup>, may our whole bodies be full of light having no part dark<sup>21</sup> in our thinking as the light of Christ shines into the darkest part of our lives.**

Jesus faithfully declared what he had heard from his Father, <sup>22</sup>

### **The Benchmark Jesus Set**

By their fruits you will know them<sup>23</sup>, the true heart of people is revealed by the outcome of their lives.

It is not what we or people want to appear, but how we/they treat the hungry, the sick, those least able to look after themselves that really matters.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John 1:17

<sup>5</sup> John 1:14

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>7</sup> John 10:10

<sup>8</sup> John 1:4 greek word is more inclusive than the word men

<sup>9</sup> John 1:9

<sup>10</sup> John 1:5

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 4:17

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 11:28-30

<sup>13</sup> John 3:16

<sup>14</sup> John 15:9

<sup>15</sup> John 15:15

<sup>16</sup> John 15:10

<sup>17</sup> 1 John 1:5

<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>19</sup> Luke 11:35

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 6:23

<sup>21</sup> Luke 11:36

<sup>22</sup> John 8:26, John 15:15

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 7:16-20

Love is to be the motivation for our lives, by this will all men know that you are my disciples by the love you have for one another. For as the Father has loved me so have I loved you and instructed (commanded) you to love one another<sup>25</sup>

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest Commandment he replied

Love your neighbour as yourself, and when he was challenged by one who wanted to justify himself as to who his neighbour is he told the story of how the Priest and the Levite passed by without helping the one who was attacked by robbers, and how he was then helped by a Samaritan

If you fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” you do well but if you show partiality, [show respect to persons], you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. He who keeps the whole law but fails at one point has become guilty of all of it..... For judgement is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgement. What does it profit if anyone says they have faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Love the stranger (alien) for you were strangers in the land of Egypt<sup>26</sup>

Jesus taught the new and living way God had planned<sup>27</sup> he took the established understanding of his time and clarified God real intentions for example:

You have heard that it was said ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. “But I say to you, Love your enemies<sup>28</sup> and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? .....You therefore must be perfect (complete) as your heavenly Father is perfect.

To me it appears that Jesus in the above passage from Matthew was answering the plea of the Psalmist, Search me oh God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Showing that what the psalmist had said in the previous verses “Do I not hate them that hate you oh Lord.....I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them my enemies”<sup>29</sup> was not what God wanted and instead Jesus answer was clear love them. \_ As Ezekial said God is not pleased with the death of the wicked but that they should turn from their wicked way and live<sup>30</sup>

Do good to those who hate you<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 25:31-46

<sup>25</sup> John 15:9-12

<sup>26</sup> Deuteronomy 10:19

<sup>27</sup> Hebrews 10:20

<sup>28</sup> Luke 6:27&35 Matthew 5:43-48 and 5:38-42

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 139:19-24

<sup>30</sup> Ezekiel 33:11

<sup>31</sup> Luke 6:27

Jesus came because God loves us and in order that we might have life and have it more abundantly<sup>32</sup>

where his kingdom was not of this world so his disciples would not need to fight for it<sup>33</sup>.

that to as many as believe that he came from God and faithfully proclaimed God's teaching and received him he gave power to become true children of God,<sup>34</sup>

He showed God's love for children, and explained that it is very serious to give offence to a child, to offend a child goes further than just causing a child to sin<sup>35</sup>.

### **Forgiveness/relationship**

God loves us, and is willing to forgive us for the wrong we have done as Jesus did for the thief on the cross<sup>36</sup> however

On going forgiveness is dependent on forgiving others<sup>37</sup>,

for blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy<sup>38</sup>

and with the judgement we judge others we will be judged<sup>39</sup>

**Ongoing Relationship with God is dependent on our attitude to and how we treat other people.**

He taught us to pray forgive us as we forgive others, and explained that if we did not forgive even what has already been forgiven may come back on us.<sup>40</sup> Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy<sup>41</sup>.

How we will fare on the day of justice will depend on how we treat the hungry, the sick, those least able to look after themselves is what really matters<sup>42</sup>. As John his disciple put it "Whoever has this worlds goods and sees others in need and shuts up his compassion for him, how dwells the love of God in him<sup>43</sup>

If when you bring your gift to God<sup>44</sup> you remember he has something against you go first and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift. John put it this way "If anyone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this is the commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his

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<sup>32</sup> John 10:10

<sup>33</sup> John 18:36

<sup>34</sup> John 1:9

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 18:1-6 & 10

<sup>36</sup> Luke 23:40-43

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 18:21-35

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 5:7

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 7:1

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 18:35

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 5:7

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 25:31

<sup>43</sup> 1John 3:17

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 5:25



brother also<sup>45</sup>. Or as Paul said In as much as it lies with you live at peace with all people<sup>46</sup>

Jesus said “If anyone loves me he will keep my word *λογου*(logos) and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words, and the words which you hear is not mine but the Father who sent me.”<sup>47</sup> “You are already pruned (made clean) by the word (logos) I have spoken” “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.....If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin”<sup>48</sup>

Yes Jesus was hated for exposing the hypocrisy of the religious rulers of his day and exposing how they transgressed the commandments of God for the sake of their traditions, for example saying that if people give to God they do not need to look after their parents<sup>49</sup>. Exposing how they taught the letter of the law tithing mint, dill and cumin and neglecting weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith;<sup>50</sup>

Jesus taught the new and living way<sup>51</sup> God had planned, that the old order was passing away. He mediated the new covenant that is better, enacted on better promises.....so treating the first as obsolete.....and what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.<sup>52</sup> Yes Jesus said **that the Law and the Prophets were unto John,**<sup>53</sup>

Jesus said to the multitude as well as his disciples “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and each day be ready to encounter any extremity (take up his cross) and follow me. For whoever would save his *ψυτχην* (soul) inner self, seat of religious and moral sentiment will lose it: and whoever relinquishes his soul for the sake of me and the joyful good news (gospel ) will save it. For what profits a man if to gain the whole world and loses or forfeits himself (his soul). For what might a man exchange for himself,? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words *λογου* in this faithless and ungodly (adulterous and sinful) generation of him will the son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels<sup>54</sup>

Everyone coming to me and hearing my words *λογουανδ* and following them is like a person building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock

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<sup>45</sup> 1John 4:20-21

<sup>46</sup> Romans 14:19 Heb 12 :14

<sup>47</sup> John 14:23-24

<sup>48</sup> John 15:18-23

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 15:19 Mark 7:1-13

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 23:23-24

<sup>51</sup> Hebrews 10:20

<sup>52</sup> Hebrews 8:8-13

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 11:13 Luke 16:16

<sup>54</sup> Mark 8:34-38 combined with Luke 9:23-27

so that when the river flooded it did not shake the house.<sup>55</sup> “Why” Jesus asked “do you call me Lord Lord and do not the things which I say”

For 2000 years in one way or another excuses have been made for not following the new and living way instructions Jesus gave, not listening to his word, nor to his Fathers word “this is my beloved son hear him”.

Is it right for a professed follower of Jesus to ascribe or give the same authority to all that was said in the Old Testament as they give to the faithful teaching of Jesus the son of God, the word of God who lived on earth? Is there anything in the Old Testament that provides an excuse for not doing what Jesus taught? The Old Testament provides the context for the Life of Jesus, the context of the decedents of Abraham, and in particular that of Judah and Benjamin two of the twelve tribe of Israel. The Old Testament also contains prophesies that came “as men who were moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”<sup>56</sup> in expectation of the coming of the anointed one the Messiah. Passages that Jesus opened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” But the Old Testament also records what false prophets said. And <sup>57</sup> Jesus told how people in the past spoke well of the false prophets<sup>58</sup>. So just because something is in the Old Testament does not mean that it provide justification for behaviour, by those who look to Jesus Christ as Saviour for actions contrary, to what Jesus Christ taught?

To put it another way, Since while in times past God spoke by the prophets<sup>59</sup>, he has now spoken by his Son Jesus Christ the Word of God<sup>60</sup>, who faithfully taught what the Father gave him<sup>61</sup>, is it not disrespectful to him to elevate the collection of; history; letters; and writings of the old testament to the same authority as what Jesus taught? Especially when on several occasions Jesus took the perceived teaching of the Old Testament and said Your have heard it said .....But I say unto you, and pointed to a higher and humanly more difficult ideal.

The question Jesus asked “Why do you call me Lord Lord and not do the things which I say”<sup>62</sup> Could one not add the question “Why do you call Jesus Saviour<sup>63</sup> and not follow what he said?”

Why do you refuse to listen to Jesus that ye may have life, why do you cling on to Old Testament ways instead of following the New and Living Way. May we all

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<sup>55</sup> Luke 6:46-49

<sup>56</sup> 2 Peter 1:21

<sup>57</sup> Luke 24:27 for context 13-34.

<sup>58</sup> Luke 6:26

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>60</sup> John 1:1-4&14

<sup>61</sup> John 12:48-50

<sup>62</sup> Luke 6:46

<sup>63</sup> Frequently as in 2 Peter 1:11 the phrase ‘Our lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is used’ but the possessive pronoun ‘our’ sounds like we own or have the right to define Jesus Christ whereas the greek phrase “the lord of us “ does not include the possessive element.

examine ourselves that we are in the faith, and that we have not turned the grace of God into Wantonness<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jude :4