

# Why True Disciples Are an Everlasting Foundation

There are over 1,000 names and titles for God's people in His Word. One of the most awe-inspiring is found only one time in the Bible, in Proverbs 10:25 (NKJV):

"As the whirlwind passes, so the wicked is no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation."

The primary proof of the temporary existence of "whirlwinds" (tornadoes) is the destruction they leave behind—broken buildings, uprooted trees and people and animals, injured or killed. So it is with those who live wicked lives.

They pass through this world, leaving destruction everywhere they go—broken hearts, damaged lives and a death-dealing effect on others, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Not so with the righteous. Their lives—full of godly principles, spiritual fruit and purposeful goals—provide something quite the opposite: a strong foundation on which others can build.

Children can build on the foundation of godly parents who provide a positive example of the way to serve God in this world. Friends, co-workers and family members, seeking spiritual answers, can build on the foundation of sincere Christians who uphold God's standards before their eyes. Even God Himself is able to build His infinite plans and purposes on the lives of those who are faithfully committed to His cause. Yes, "the righteous is an everlasting foundation."

## **We Are Because We Have**

The Modern English Version translates this passage differently, offering instead that, "the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation." Both renderings are relevant and complementary. Because if we *have* an everlasting foundation,

automatically, we are an everlasting foundation to those we influence. When we enter a covenant relationship with God, He offers immovable, unshakeable, foundational things on which we can build our hopes and dreams for the future that include the following:

1. **The church**—Beneath every individual Christian is the support structure of the entire church of God worldwide. The true church, made up of all who have been born again out of every denomination, is described as the “foundation of the truth”—a bulwark against deception from generation to generation, for all who love the truth and proclaim it (1 Tim. 3:15).
2. **The apostles and the prophets**—In Ephesians 2:19-20, the epistle writer shared how “the household of God” is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” True prophetic and apostolic ministries undergird the church with divine revelation and anointed purposes so that the “gates of hell” do not and will not “prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). No wonder the names of the original twelve apostles will be engraved on the twelve foundations of the eternal city, New Jerusalem. For the populace of that eternal city will be able to trace the advance of the kingdom of God and the transformation of all who have been saved in this New Covenant era back to their initial efforts (see Revelation 21:14).
3. **The Word of God**—Hebrews 6:1-2 (NKJV) talks about “the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” But these six primary doctrines in Scripture are not the only “foundational” truths on which God’s people place their trust. The entire Word of God is our strong foundation that will keep us safe during the storms of life (see Matthew 7:24-25). It is

unconquerable, unchangeable and irreversible—forever “settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89).

4. **God’s holy mountains**—Psalms 87:1 (ISV) says, “God’s foundation is in the holy mountains.” The most significant spiritual events that have ever taken place in this world happened on eight mountains: Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Nebo, Gerizim, Olivet, Golgotha (Calvary) and Zion. God laid the foundation of all that He is doing in the realm of time on these mountains, and they provide the unchanging, immoveable base and support of every true believer.
5. **God’s foundational plan**—All that has transpired to redeem humanity was part of a “foundational plan” in the very beginning; nothing has happened by chance. Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). God’s “works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb. 4:3). One day we will enter a kingdom “prepared” for us “from the foundation of the world,” and all because we were “chosen in Him before the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34, Eph. 1:4). Nothing can alter or hinder what God has purposed from the beginning and we are a part of that “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11).
6. **Jesus**—The foundation of ALL foundations mentioned thus far is the Lord Himself. “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11, NKJV). He is a “sure foundation” for all who love Him and call upon His name (Isa. 28:16).

Considering that you have such an everlastingly stable, six-layered foundation, it is fully believable that you can be “an everlasting foundation” to those who need your example of spiritual stability in this unstable world. Start looking at yourself this way and discover, with worshipful awe in your

heart, how God can build on your life things of eternal value.

To dig deeper into this wonderful revelation, listen to the episode on our calling to be “An Everlasting Foundation” in the podcast series by Mike Shreve called “Discover Your Spiritual Identity.” {eoa}

*Mike Shreve has taught on the theme of our spiritual identity for over 35 years, giving sons and daughters of God the comfort and empowerment of knowing who they are “in Christ.” This powerful insight is featured on a weekly podcast on , a weekly TV program on It’s Supernatural Network (ISN) both titled “Discover Your Spiritual Identity,” and a Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. A product of the Jesus Movement Era, Mike Shreve has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. You may also want to subscribe to his second podcast on comparative religion titled “Revealing the True Light” and visit his website and YouTube channel.*

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## **An Amazing Night in India When 6 Killers Witnessed ‘A Wondrous Sign’**

A mysterious ancient prophecy declares that God’s New Covenant offspring are “for signs and for wonders” (Isa. 8:18, see Hebrews 2:13). That high calling was evidenced in the early

church and it's still true now.

I have carried the gospel several times to India—the birthplace of Hinduism and yoga. When I tell the massive audiences that I once studied under one of their gurus (back in 1969-1970), but became a follower of Jesus, it powerfully breaks down religious and cultural barriers. Like the psalmist David, I become “a wondrous sign to many” (Ps. 71:7).

One of the greatest ways these promises were fulfilled happened in the city of Kumbakonam. The local pastors informed me I was the first western missionary to conduct an outdoor Christian gathering within the city limits. Several thousand were in attendance, sitting on the ground and on top of the walls enclosing the field. Several huge Hindu temples towered over that area.

Hindu people are usually known for attitudes like gentleness and tolerance, but that night, six radical Hindus decided they were going to do something extreme to keep Christianity out of their city. They planned to storm the platform at the end of my message, beat me up publicly, tie me to the bumper of their car and drag me through the city until I was dead. But the God of signs and wonders had other plans.

Toward the end of my message, I felt an overwhelming sense of demonic resistance. I knew if I gave an altar call, very few would respond. They just didn't understand what I had shared. Then God spoke to my heart, “Call for the deaf . . . and let this crowd know that if what you have preached is true, every deaf person will hear again.” At first, my heart was gripped with anxiety as all the “What if?” questions flooded my mind, but I knew God was in it—so I boldly presented the challenge.

Within just a few minutes, they brought seven deaf persons to the platform: four were totally deaf, three were deaf in one ear. Intentionally, I asked to pray for one of the totally-deaf persons first (not knowing how important that decision

would prove to be). He was about twenty-three years old and had been unable to hear anything for five years. Laying my hands on his ears, I began commanding his ears to open by the power of the name of Jesus.

At the same time, the radical Hindu group began creeping up the back stairwell leading to the platform. There was about a 20-foot-high gate with a large padlock that was supposed to prevent break-ins, but it quickly proved insufficient. The large padlock was no match against the forceful blows from their sledgehammer; it soon clattered to the concrete. I had no idea what was causing all the loud noise behind me, but I knew I could not afford to be distracted—so I stayed focused on praying for the young man. But then, the gate swung open. I turned to see what was happening and was quite shocked to see six men running toward me.

At that precise moment, the young man jerked out of my hands and began to scream, “I can hear! I can hear!” (What perfect timing, right?!?!) The radical leader immediately stopped in his tracks—stunned at what he was witnessing. He walked over and began to talk to the young man, whispering words in his ears and having him repeat them back. Amazed, he called his associates over. I could hear them talking among themselves, affirming, “It is a true miracle.” The crowd erupted in praise to God. I knew faith was at a high level and moving fast would bring optimum results. So, I went to the second person and prayed. He was healed. Then the rest, one by one. All were healed. All seven heard again. Falsely assuming the six men who stormed the platform were a pastorally-appointed checking committee to verify the miracles, I asked them to check each person who claimed to be hearing again—and they complied, confirming each healing.

Immediately after that, I gave an altar call and about 500 people came forward to give their hearts to Jesus. The six men on the platform that I thought were my appointed “checking committee” also fell to their knees and got right with God. I

had no idea their intention that night was to publicly execute me. But the God of signs and wonders manifested Himself miraculously and thwarted the enemy's agenda.

The next day, that group of six "formerly" radical Hindus asked to meet with me. They shared their story as I sat there in amazement. The leader told me why his evil agenda changed so quickly the night before. Are you ready for this? The first deaf person to be healed was his next-door neighbor so he knew it was an actual miracle (What a mighty God we serve!). It convinced him immediately that what I preached was true and he needed to repent.

The God of signs and wonders is still alive and ready to move on the behalf of those who approach Him with bold faith. Expect to receive "signs and wonders" *from* Him and to become "a wondrous sign" *for* Him—to thwart the plans and purposes of the enemy in this dark hour. That calling still rests on every believer.

To dig deeper into this revelation, listen to a recent episode of Mike Shreve's "Discover Your Spiritual Identity" podcast on "Our Calling to Be Signs and Wonders." {eoa}

**Mike Shreve** *has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 35 years has been the spiritual identity of believers. This powerful insight is featured on his weekly podcast on titled "Discover Your Spiritual Identity." It is also the theme of his Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. The first three categories on his YouTube website expand on this amazing revelation:*

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.

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# Why You Are the Apple of God's Eye

Three times in the Old Testament, God's people—both nationally and individually—are described as “the apple of His eye” (Deut. 32:10, Zech. 2:8 and Ps. 17:8).

Although this was originally a title given to the physical offspring of Abraham, born-again believers of the New Covenant have the right to claim this title also. Having been “grafted” into the olive tree of Israel, we inherit the names and titles that apply to God's Old Covenant nation. The church has not replaced Israel's unique relationship and position with Yahweh; however, we are blessed to share it because we are in covenant with Israel's Messiah (see Romans 11:17).

The first time biblically this name for God's people appears is in “The Song of Moses” (see Deuteronomy 31:30-32:43). The prophet was reminding Israelites of their condition when God found them, and the wondrous things He did in their behalf with these words:

“He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye” (Deut. 32:10, NKJV).

Often, this statement is wrongly compared to a literal apple—but it has absolutely nothing to do with that popular fruit. The “apple of the eye” is another name for the pupil—the centermost part of the eye. For that reason, the Modern English Version translates the last part of that verse:

“. . . He protected him [Israel] like the pupil of His eye” (Deut. 32:10).

The “apple” of the eye (the pupil) actually has no fleshly substance; it is a hole filled with a liquid solution called *aqueous humor*, the same fluid that bathes the entire eye. When we refer to someone as the apple of our eye, it is a symbolic, poetical way of saying that person is the focus of our lives and deeply cherished. How encouraging it is to know God feels this way toward His people! We are the “center” of His attention and the “focus” of His love, and He is constantly watching over us to preserve and protect us.

No wonder the prophet Zechariah warned:

“He who touches you touches the Apple of His Eye” (Zech. 2:8).

In other words, the Lord is communicating, “If someone mistreats or persecutes any of My offspring, it’s as if that person is belligerently jabbing his finger right in the middle of My eye.” Why would the Creator feel this way? Because one of the things that pains God most is the pain of His people. Another version of this same passage has God saying, “Anyone who strikes you strikes what is most precious to me” (Zech. 2:8, GNT).

### **The Messianic Application**

To understand how God will “keep us” as “the apple of His eye,” we need to ask, “How does a human being normally ‘keep’ or ‘guard’ the pupil of his eye?” Simple. The arm is quickly raised to fend off any blow or dangerous object, for any sensible person is far more willing to suffer a temporary bruise to the arm than a permanent injury to the eyes.

In a spiritual sense, that’s what God did when Jesus died on Golgotha. He “raised His arm and took the blow.” You see, from ancient days, the Messiah was referred to biblically as “the arm of the Lord,” as in the following prophecies of Isaiah:

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” (Isa. 53:1, NKJV).

“The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isa. 52:10).

When the Son of God was lifted up on the cross, as God’s “holy arm,” He took the death-blow of sin that should have permanently blinded all of us to the things of God—and He did it to preserve and protect His treasured ones, all who would ever belong to Him in a covenant relationship, that we might see His glory—for time and eternity.

### **Responding in Great Gratitude**

When we glimpse the glory of what God has done to “keep” us from this dangerous world, to preserve us in this valley of the shadow of death, it becomes imperative that we respond with gratitude. Is a shout of praise sufficient or is there an even more convincing way to display our devotion? God discloses the best method of returning His exceptional kindness in Proverbs 7:2, a passage in which He urges His own:

“Keep My commandments and live and My law as the apple of your eye.”

In other words, God is saying, “Embrace My Word with all your heart. Fall in love with My commandments; let them forever be your focus in life, your most precious possession. Let them be at the very center of all that you are and all that you do. Guard them as you would guard your own eyes.”

This is truly the least that we can do. {eoa}

Note: To dig deeper into this wonderful revelation, listen to the episode on our calling to be “the Apple of God’s Eye” in the podcast series by Mike Shreve called “Discover Your Spiritual identity.”

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## **Why the ‘Heirs of Salvation’ Means Much More Than You Think**

One of the most powerful names for God’s people is found only once in the Bible:

*But to which of the angels, did He say at any time, “Sit on My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool?” Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14 MKJV)*

Evidently, one of the primary functions of the angels of God is to supply provision and protection to those who inherit salvation from God. This is heaven’s focus and it means much more than most believers have ever imagined.

The word “salvation” is found 162 times in the New King James Version of the Bible (118 times in the Old Testament and 44 times in the New). Though used in a variety of ways, it always means deliverance. For instance, when the children of Israel stood at the edge of the Red Sea, Moses cried out:

“Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever” (Exod. 14:13).

When Paul was incarcerated, he wrote the Philippian church:

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19, KJV).

In both cases, salvation meant something different than deliverance from sin. The children of Israel were delivered from the Egyptian army. Paul was delivered from prison and from Jewish zealots who had been trying to kill him. For the “heirs of salvation,” this word primarily means deliverance from sin, from satanic plots, from the curse of Adam, from the curse of the Law and, ultimately, from death, hell and the grave.

### **The Threefold Nature of Salvation**

We human beings have a triune nature: spirit, soul and body. Parallel to this, our salvation is also threefold:

- **We were saved from the penalty of sin** (when our spirits were regenerated and renewed in the Holy Spirit—2 Tim. 3:5).
- **We are being saved from the power of sin** (as we daily experience deliverance from soulish battles of the mind, will and emotions—James 1:21, Phil. 2:12).
- **We will be saved from the presence of sin** (when we are delivered from the bondage of our flesh, either at death or when the living are translated at the coming of the Lord).

## **God Our Savior**

Under the Old Covenant, salvation was primarily “of the Jews” (John 4:22). Now, under the New Covenant, God would have “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). After Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit, the angel commanded Joseph, “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21, NKJV). How appropriate! For the name Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*) means “salvation,” or in essence, “*God* manifested as a Savior.”

The same voice that insisted under the Old Testament times, “Beside Me there is no Savior” still states under the New Testament, “I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved.” (Isa. 43:11, NKJV; John 10:9, DLNT). The Yahweh of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament and He still sends forth the urgent appeal:

“Turn to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22, ISV).

## **The Nature of Salvation**

No one can earn salvation. It cannot be achieved by character development, religious works or man-made rituals. We never become “good enough” to be saved. We simply reach out with faith, humility and sincerity, and gratefully receive what God delights to give:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9, MEV).

Parents should expect this gift to overflow the lives of their offspring as well, for God’s salvation is “from generation to generation” (Isa. 51:8). He has already promised, “I will contend with him who contends with you and I will save your children” (Isa. 49:25; read Luke 19:1-10).

Thank God, it's not difficult to be saved. Mysterious, mystical formulas are not required. Years of self-abasement and self-discipline are not demanded to qualify. It is so utterly simple:

"Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13, NKJV).

### **The Many Sides of Sozo**

The main Greek word translated "save" is *sozo*, found 115 times in the New Testament. Interestingly, in the MEV, it has also been translated healed, preserve and will be well. Some specific examples include:

**The demoniac at Gadara**—"He who had been possessed by demons was *healed (sozo)*" (Luke 8:36, MEV).

**Paul's expectation**—"The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will *preserve (sozo)* me for His heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:18, MEV).

**The disciples of Lazarus**—"Lord, if he is sleeping, he *will be well (sozo)*" (John 11:12).

These three examples reveal that salvation is not just limited to forgiveness of sins; it involves healing, preservation, wellness and wholeness in our entire being. Hebrews 7:25 also states that Jesus is "able to save (*sozo*) to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, because He at all times lives to make intercession for them."

### **Ultimate Salvation**

Thank God the day will come when "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). The dead in Christ will rise and living believers will be translated at the coming of the Lord. At that glorious moment, we will experience complete salvation: glorified "in a moment" (1 Cor. 15:52). For those looking for His return, He shall "appear the

second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28, KJV). We will then be thrust into the next phase of God’s purposes in this vast, magnificent universe.

When time will merge with eternity, what ecstasy will be ours as we join the white-robed, palm-waving throng on the sea of glass mingled with fire! Surrounded by the angels who helped us on our journey, we will joyously shout that ultimate declaration of triumph: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”” (Rev. 7:10). {eoa}

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# How God's Word Declares His People Are 'The Rich of the Earth'

"All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him" (Ps. 22:29, NIV).

Psalm 22 contains some of the most detailed predictions of the crucifixion of Jesus to be found in the Old Testament. Consider the following three:

- A statement He made on the cross—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22:1; fulfilled Matt. 27:46)
- How the soldiers gambled over His clothing—"They part My garments among them, and cast lots for my clothes" (Ps. 22:18, MEV; fulfilled Mark 15:24).
- His torturous death—"They pierced My hands and My feet" (Ps. 22:16, NKJV; fulfilled John 19:37, 20:25-26).

After such graphic descriptions of the Messiah's execution, the psalmist foretold how believers would benefit:

"The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him—may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship" (Ps. 22:26-29, NIV).

Notice that both the first and last sentence of this passage speak of "eating" something because of Jesus' death on Calvary. What kind of meal did God provide through the suffering of His Son? During His ministry, Jesus explained:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone

eats of this bread, he will live forever. The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh” (John 6:51, MEV).

At the Last Supper, He continued unveiling this mystery:

“As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take and eat. This is My body’” (Matt. 26:26).

“Then He took the cup, and after He gave thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’” (Matt. 26:27-28).

Jesus’ sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension to heaven made it possible for those who believe to “eat” of His flesh and “drink” of His blood in a spiritual sense, thus becoming one with Him forever. This happens in a much more profound way than just taking communion in church. That ritual is only a symbol of something far more important: spiritual communion.

Jesus was the Word made flesh (see John 1:14). Therefore, to “eat His flesh” means to eat His Word, digesting truth into our innermost being. The communion ritual also involves ingesting the juice that symbolizes Jesus’ blood. The Old Testament reveals “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11). Therefore, the life of God is in the blood of God (see Acts 20:28). To drink His blood is to drink in His life-giving Spirit: His nature, His attributes, His very essence.

As we partaker of this spiritual meal (the Word and the Spirit), we are made rich with something Jesus called “true riches” (Luke 16:11). Paul put a spiritual magnifying glass on this insight:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that through

His poverty you might be rich:" (2 Cor. 8:9).

What does that mean—Jesus “became poor”? What made Him rich? Stocks, bonds, real estate, corporate holdings, a large bank account?

Of course not. The Son of God was rich in the splendor of heaven, rich in intimate fellowship with the Father, rich in the adoration of angels, rich in the undisturbed peace of heaven—but He divested Himself of all those supernatural riches to assume the poverty-stricken form of human flesh to rescue us. When He went to the cross, He was reduced to an even greater state of spiritual poverty, for He became “sin for us.”

The one thing that enriched Him while He was on the earth (the presence of the Holy Spirit) departed from Him then as He “experienced death for everyone” (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 2:9). Yet “through His poverty,” those who believe would be made rich in many ways:

- **Rich in God’s goodness**— “Do you despise the riches of His goodness, tolerance, and patience, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4, MEV).
- **Rich in faith**—“Listen, my beloved brothers. Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5).
- **Rich in God’s glory**—“And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom. 9:23, NKJV).
- **Rich in grace**—“In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7, MEV).
- **Rich in the Word**—“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

By receiving this abundance of spiritual wealth, we will ultimately serve as eternal proof of the indescribable generosity of our heavenly Father, “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7, NKJV).

Yes, we truly are “the rich of the earth”—far richer than the wealthiest elite among us who have not yet established a covenant relationship with Him. {eoa}

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## **The Most Prolific Calling You Have as a Child of God**

To function effectively as children of God, we must discover our spiritual identity, then consistently and confidently walk

in it. This is best accomplished by learning the names and titles God has given us in His Word.

For over three decades, I have diligently studied this primary theme in God's Word. Of the hundreds of names bestowed on us, some have impacted me in very profound ways. Such is the case with this title found in 2 Corinthians 5:20 (MEV). Paul, the prolific, apostolic epistle-writer, declares:

"So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you in Christ's stead: Be reconciled to God."

An "ambassador" is a representative, a messenger, one sent on a specific errand.

The person who fills this role effectively seeks to speak not his own mind but the mind of the nation, the organization or the leader he represents. Therefore, an ambassador is someone who has lost his own personal agenda, assuming the identity and heralding the cause of another.

When John the Baptist was asked by his detractors to identify himself, he could have easily boasted, "I am the son of Zechariah, the high priest, the sole heir of the most respected religious position in Israel." Instead, he responded, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (John 1:23; see Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1).

When this last of the Old Testament prophets walked across the pages of history, he was not striving to draw attention to himself. On the contrary, his mission and message were far more important and his passion was exalting the Messiah. He even declared, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

In consideration of this example, the first dominant character trait of a true ambassador must be *selflessness*.

When a United States ambassador speaks, it is understood that he is sanctioned and supported by all the combined authority of the United States military and government—the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, the Pentagon, the Congress, the Senate, all the way up to the chiefs of staff, the cabinet, the vice president and the president himself. It's as if an invisible host surrounds the ambassador and lends their united influence and superior strength, even in hostile and challenging areas of the world. It is no wonder that an ambassador can prevent a major war or sway a whole nation, for he or she could well say, "There are more for me than there are against me."

In like manner, as "ambassadors of the Messiah," we are encompassed with a "great cloud of witnesses" for not only do we speak in the name of the King of all kings, we represent the entire kingdom and all its citizenry (2 Cor. 5:20, CJB, Heb. 12:1). Our authority is undergirded by all God's chosen from the Old Covenant, including the patriarchs, prophets, judges, priests and all true Israelites, as well as all of God's people under the New Covenant: the entire body of Christ spanning two millennia. When we truly speak under the inspiration of God and under His anointing, what we say can potentially bear just as much authority as the Lord of hosts speaking Himself.

Therefore, ambassadors are also persons of great authority who can act with great boldness.

Jesus was the firstborn ambassador of heaven: the prime example of this calling to all who would follow. All believers are His many brethren, chosen to walk in His likeness—continuing His mission and perpetuating His message—not a message of condemnation or religious legalism! Quite the contrary, it is a message of love, mercy, forgiveness and restoration. No wonder it is called "the gospel" (meaning good news).

Look at our main verse again, undergirded by the two verses preceding it:

“All this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them, and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you in Christ’s stead: Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20, MEV, author’s emphasis).

Ambassadors of heaven are called to be God’s mouthpieces, equipped with the principal “ministry” and “message” of the firstborn Son—which, according to this passage, is reconciliation (restoration to a right and harmonious relationship with God).

In this New Covenant era especially, God is not interested in cutting people off. On the contrary, He is very passionate about cutting people free—from the sin of our pasts and the judgment we deserve. So, instead of going through life poised to condemn others for their bad actions and attitudes, let’s rightly represent heaven by declaring the incredible power of the cross—the Messiah’s promise to restore even the most erring human beings to a harmonious, peaceful and fruitful relationship with the Everlasting Father above. {eoa}

*A product of the Jesus Movement Era, **Mike Shreve** has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 35 years has been the spiritual identity of believers. This powerful insight is featured on his weekly podcast on and his TV program—both titled “Discover Your Spiritual Identity.” It is also the theme of his Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. The first three categories on his YouTube website expand on this amazing revelation:*

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## **Spirit-Filled Evangelist: Our Calling to Be ‘The Children of Zion’**

“Let Israel rejoice in its Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King” (Ps. 149:2, MEV).

In the beginning, Zion was a ridge in southeast Jerusalem where David’s tabernacle was erected for the ark of the covenant after its return from Philistine captivity (see 1 Chronicles 15-16). On top of Mount Zion, something very profound and prophetic transpired, because a grand departure from the archaic order of Moses unfolded. David, by divine revelation, instituted a fresh approach to the worship of God:

- **The ark in full view** – Instead of the ark being hidden behind a veil, to be seen only one day a year by the high priest (on the Day of Atonement), apparently it was placed in the full view of all the priests who ministered daily before the Lord and the people who came to adore the God of Abraham. The Shekinah glory of God must have radiated from between the cherubim on the mercy seat, the lid of that sacred golden container in which could be found the handwriting of God on tablets of stone. We can only imagine the awe-inspiring,

supernatural intensity that pervaded the atmosphere on that holy hill.

- **Spiritual worship** – At its dedication, animal sacrifices were offered up, consecrating David’s tabernacle but never again afterward. Instead of that morbid daily reminder of the curse of death that follows sin (the normal pattern at Moses’s Tabernacle), the priests gathered 24/7 to offer “spiritual sacrifices” – sacrifices of thanksgiving, praise, joy and righteousness – shouting, singing, clapping hands, dancing before the Lord and playing the “instruments of God” (1 Pet. 2:5, 1 Chron. 16:42, KJV). Little did they know that this was all a prophetic picture of what would eventually become the “new normal” after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Messiah – with the entrance of the New Covenant in the upper room. The prophet Amos foretold this truth and the first apostolic council confirmed it (see Amos 9:11, Acts 15:16).
- **The throne of the king** – David also erected a second tabernacle on Mount Zion housing his throne. Petitioners came to him there to present their cases and receive the king’s just decrees. This was a prophetic picture of how sons and daughters of God, in the New Covenant, are invited to “come boldly to the throne of grace” where God provides His solutions to our dilemmas (Heb. 4:16, NKJV).

The word “Zion” means fortress, so when worshipers came to mount Zion in David’s day, they came to a fortress of truth in a world full of deception, a fortress of faith in a world full of unbelief – where they witnessed the radiance of God’s glory. They also came near the throne of the king to receive his righteous decrees. What a fitting symbol for the New Covenant “children of Zion.” In this era, “Zion” has evolved to mean a glorious, heavenly realm; the high place of worship that all of God’s people ascend to worldwide – a place where we approach the throne of the King of kings, where He provides

solutions to the problems we face in this world.

In contrasting the Old and New Covenants, the writer of Hebrews alluded to this spiritual reality by comparing the visitation at Mount Sinai (where the law was given) to what happened on Mount Zion (where a heaven-on-earth celebration took place). To the believers of this New Testament era, he insisted:

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and storm, and to the sound of a trumpet and to a voice speaking words, such that those who heard them begged that the word not be spoken to them anymore . . . But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven; to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of the righteous ones made perfect; and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant; and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:18-19, 22-24, MEV).

When we experienced the “new birth,” in a spiritual sense, we became “children of Zion” on a much higher, spiritual level – citizens of a heavenly city, blessed to experience a taste of heaven while walking on earth (see Psalm 87:5-6). We did not find wholeness by coming to the Law. We found grace, forgiveness and restoration by approaching the throne of the great King, heaven’s Mediator, who pardoned us and brought us into His family.

Now the children of God can live on the slopes of this spiritual mountain every day, constantly communing with Him. It’s not about rules and regulations. It’s not about religion. It’s about relationship. It’s about transformation. We are all considered “firstborn sons” basking in the glorious love of our heavenly Father, enjoying the privileges of a “better covenant . . . established on better promises” (Heb. 8:6).

We rejoice in this portion of our inheritance but we are also looking forward to the era when Zion will be the hub of the government of God universally and His kingdom will fully manifest throughout a new creation to come. In that phenomenal age, more than ever before:

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth” (Ps. 50:2, NKJV). {eoa}

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## **The Mystery of the Seal of God**

In Scripture, a “seal” is a device made of stone, jewels, metal or some other hard substance, with a raised or inset

engraving. If pressed into a soft substance, like clay, wax or paper, a seal leaves an image, an impression, that identifies it with its owner and carries just as much authority as a signature.

In ancient times, for those engaged in business, a seal was more than an accessory; it was a necessity. The use of seals is still widespread today, like notary seals or corporate seals, to authenticate certain documents or authorize certain transactions. In Bible days, a seal was often worn on a necklace or mounted on a ring (called a "signet ring"). Notice the words "signet" and "signature" are very similar, because they fulfill a similar function. Seals of this nature are mentioned over sixty times in Scripture.

One of the most powerful passages about "the seal of God" is Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV):

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

Notice the first two phrases in this passage—"in Him" and "in whom." This reveals that being "sealed" is a positional inheritance, assigned to us by the Father because of our position "in Christ." Because we are surrendered to Jesus' Lordship and Headship, all that He is transfers to us. The reason we have received the seal of God is because Jesus, the firstborn Son, received the seal of God first, and we are "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Only one verse testifies of this "sealing" in Jesus' life. A large group came to make Him King, primarily because He had just multiplied the loaves and fishes, and they had eaten their fill. He responded to the crowd of exuberant admirers with the following words:

“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For God the Father has set His seal on Him” (John 6:27).

Remember, a seal is an emblem of authority, a validation of purpose, an indication of protection and the transfer of a unique image identifying the sealed object with the one who owns it. So at least five things are conveyed by the seal that was placed on Jesus:

- The authority of the Father passed to the Son
- The purpose of the Father revealed in the Son
- The protection of the Father surrounding the Son
- The union of the Father with the Son
- The image of the Father expressed in the Son.

This last point was so pronounced that He claimed, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

And so it is, to a limited degree, for every sealed believer: Jesus has passed His authority to us, revealed His purpose in us, placed His protection on us and expressed His image in us. No wonder His choice people in these perilous last days are referred to in Scripture as “the sealed” who will apparently be protected in a time of great catastrophe (Rev. 7:4, Darby).

Regardless of what the future holds for any of us, one thing is certain: Those who are sealed will be carried through victoriously. {eoa}

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## **Strong is How We Are Defined as God's Children**

Too often, God's people identify themselves as "the weak" when God's declares that we are "the strong." To succeed in life, we must see ourselves as God sees us. The best way to do that is to embrace the names and titles God has given us in His Word.

God refers to His people as "the strong" only once in Scripture, hidden away in Isaiah 53: a prophetic passage about the crucifixion of the Son of God. Even though it was yet a future event, strangely, the prophet spoke of the death of the Messiah as if it had already happened. This could be labeled "the past-prophetic tense" (a unique method God often uses). Consider the following three verses:

"Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:4-6, MEV).

Then, in the final verse of that chapter, the Father foretold the glorious outcome:

“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with THE STRONG, because He poured out His soul to death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, thus he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Is. 53:12).

Mysteriously, God refers to those who will yet benefit from Jesus’ death on the cross as “the strong.” What a miraculous transformation! Prior to that pivotal event on Calvary, all who are unsaved in this world could easily be described as “the weak”—overpowered and enslaved—by the curse of Adam, the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the control of satanic powers, the fallen nature and the shadow of death.

Helpless and hopeless, vulnerable and defenseless, defeat was inevitable for all of us. But then “the strong Lord” came down to our level, assuming our low estate that we might be lifted up to His level: seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ps. 89:8, KJV; see Ephesians 2:6). And because we are enthroned with Him, our enemies have also been made our footstool (see Acts 2:34-35). Yes, we are now “the strong.”

### **What Does “Spoil” Mean?**

Our foundation scripture declares that the Father will “divide the spoil with the strong,” but what does that mean?

The normal definition of “spoil” is plunder or booty taken from an enemy defeated in battle. The New Testament joyously announces that at the cross, Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers” and “made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15 KJV, NKJV). In other words, through His death, the Son of God stripped “principalities and powers” of their most valued possessions. Most likely, this is a reference to high-ranking evil spirits, assigned to regions, nations and cities who shared legal authority over various

spheres of influence in the earth. In the fall, Adam relinquished the authority over this world to Satan (who Jesus later referred to as “the prince of this world”—John 12:31, KJV). But our Redeemer has restored dominion to those who receive forgiveness through His blood. Thus, He vanquished the enemy (He “spoiled” him), taking back what Adam forfeited.

Yes, we who have been born again have been restored to the dominion Adam lost. We are blessed with dominion over sin, dominion over satanic powers, dominion over the flesh, dominion over the curse of Adam, dominion over the curse of the law, dominion over death, dominion over the grave and dominion over hell. Through our identification with the crucified One, we are cleansed. Through our identification with the risen One, we are raised to a position of spiritual supremacy and victory.

No wonder God refers to New Covenant sons and daughters of God as “the strong”—for He has made us stronger than all our adversaries. Hebrews 11:34 explains that “out of weakness,” we have been “made strong.” This impartation has happened many ways but the following three are highlighted especially in Scripture. God’s people are:

- Strong in faith (Rom. 4:20)
- Strong in grace (2 Tim. 2:1)
- Strong in the Lord and the power of His might (Eph. 6:10)

Of course, these sources of strength may remain relatively untapped unless we implement Joel’s exhortation—“Let the weak say, ‘I AM STRONG’”—for our inheritance is activated by our confession (Joel 3:10, NKJV). So, lift your voice, child of God. Be bold! The power of death and life are in your tongue. Even when you feel weak, rise up in the Spirit and dare to say:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil.

4:13).

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to a past episode of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called, "Discover Your Spiritual Identity" on our calling to be "The Strong." {eoa}

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## **It's Time to Awaken to Your Position of Spiritual Supremacy**

"The Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you will only be above and you will not be beneath, if you listen to

the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, to observe and to do them" (Deut. 28:13).

This declaration of headship was the high point of a very notable day. God wanted the choice between "life and death, blessing and curse" to be rehearsed in the minds of the Israelites at their entrance into the promised land—to strengthen their commitment to a covenant relationship with Him (Deut. 30:19).

Six tribes of Israel stood on the slopes of Mount Ebal shouting "Amen" to the curses of the Law. About 500 yards away, the other six tribes stood on the slopes of Mount Gerizim shouting "Amen" to the blessings (see Deut. 27:12-13). A special altar was erected in the valley between the mountains and from that area the Levites declared the word of the Lord. Blessings to the obedient reached a climax with this announcement of potential headship.

### **God's Motive**

Of all the nations of the world, why did God choose Israel for such a high calling? Deuteronomy 7:7-8a (NKJV) explains: "he Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all the peoples. But it is because the Lord loved you and because He kept the oath which He swore to your fathers."

Yahweh was motivated by three primary things: first, His love for Israel; second, faithfulness to the promises made to the patriarchs; and third, the fact that Israel was the least likely nation to succeed on its own. This could be described as "the mustard seed principle" in the kingdom of God. Just as the mustard seed is the least of all seeds but becomes the greatest among herbs, so the Creator loves to choose people and things that are considered the lowest, the last and the least, then transform them into the highest, the first and the

greatest—to reveal His power and give glory to His name (Matt. 13:31-32, see Rom. 9:17).

Knowing this inclination in God should build confidence in believers who feel overlooked, ostracized, unqualified, incapable, ineffective or self-condemning. God is still the same God, and He still functions in similar ways.

### **God's Intention**

Yahweh intended Israel to be the “head” in every arena of human experience: politically, militarily, socially, scientifically, educationally, monetarily, materially, religiously and spiritually. In achieving excellence and preeminence, it was to become the exemplary nation—a living testimony of what can happen when an entire nation walks in covenant with God.

What happened to hinder the plan? For a season it worked amazingly (the Red Sea opened, and Jericho's walls fell). But then, after a lengthy season of miraculous victories, Israel's headship status began to disintegrate, and the Israelites ended up becoming slaves to five successive Gentile empires—the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Grecians and finally, the Romans. For centuries, instead of being “the head,” they became “the tail” (just as God forewarned—Deut. 28:43-44). A single, two-letter word was the primary stumbling block—the fifth word in the following verse:

“Now it will be, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I am commanding you today, then the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth” (Deut. 28:1).

The word “if” was the culprit. God would only exalt them if they obeyed His commandments. So, under the Old Covenant especially, headship depended primarily on human performance. The Israelites must have trembled with a sense of foreboding when they heard one of the final proclamations:

“Cursed is he who does not confirm all the words of this law by doing them” (Deut. 27:26a).

From that moment they shouted “Amen,” the heavy responsibility of keeping all 613 commandments of the Torah loomed over them like a dark, ominous cloud. As rebellion and transgressions increased from one generation to the next, their situation grew more and more hopeless. It looked as though God’s purpose were crumbling irreparably and would end in failure.

But then Jesus came, opening the headship door not only to Jews, but to Gentiles.

### **The Mysterious Turning Point**

The miracle of the incarnation took place, and the Messiah walked among men. But Jesus (Yeshua) was more than a man; He was “God manifested in the flesh” (see 1 Tim. 3:16). After 33 years He was crucified, sinking to the lowest place of degradation. When He became “sin for us,” absorbing all the vileness of the Adamic race—in a sense, He became the vilest of all (2 Cor. 5:2). The one who was rightfully “the head” instead became “the tail” by offering Himself as our substitute.

But not for long.

Three days later, the Spirit of holiness quickened Him back to life. That pivotal event caused more than just an earthquake; it triggered a heaven-quake with rumblings that went all the way back to the fall of Adam. Through the Resurrection and ascension, God’s mighty power was released, “which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, insightfully adds that this is “a headship exercised throughout the church.”

Clearly, Jesus came down to our level for the purpose of lifting us to His level (see Eph. 2:5-6, Isa. 57:15). Through the blood that cleanses us, the Spirit that enlivens us, the name that sanctifies us and the Covenant that empowers us, believers are exalted over every enemy: sin, self, satanic powers, the world and death. Since Jesus is the head and we are His body, if all things are under His feet, all things are under our feet as well.

When sincere repentance is added to the equation in our lives, instead of personal failures being stumbling stones, leading us to degradation and destruction, they become stepping stones, leading us to a higher place of transformation—because God uses them to reveal His character to us and in us.

One day this purpose will be perfected when God’s people from both the Old and New Covenants become the ruling hierarchy over a new creation. We will then be “the head and not the tail” in a supreme way, exalted forevermore. But why wait until then for this headship calling to manifest?

To this we, too, shout “Amen!” with all our might.

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to a popular episode of Mike Shreve’s weekly podcast called *Discover Your Spiritual Identity* on our calling to be *The Head and Not the Tail*. {eoa}

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