

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

Living for Jesus

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

Author's note: Some parts of this book are adapted from "*The Africa I Knew*," by the late Pastor Timothy Chilufya, of Ndola, Zambia, a country in southern Africa. In 1994 Pastor Timothy gave us his notes on this subject. He asked us to edit and publish them.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Most young people are in some kind of bondage. Satan has them bound in shackles. His voice seems sweet and offers them fun and friends. The wrong friends tempt us to do things we know we should not do. If we go with the crowd, we get caught. And there are always consequences. Satan never tells us about the consequences. "Try a drink, or smoke a joint, it won't hurt you", the voice says. That is a lie and Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Soon we crave whatever has us hooked. We can't stop. We are held captive in Satan's kingdom of darkness (Col 1:13).

There is no way of escaping Satan's attacks. If you do not have faith in Jesus Christ then you will not have the strength to resist Satan's temptations. Only Jesus can give you the power to overcome him. Only Jesus can set you free.

A great Christian man named Paul, wrote a letter to the few Christians in Colosse, a small Roman colony in western Turkey. In which he reminds them that God has "rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves..." (Col 1:13). That Light comes to us when we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord.

Paul and Silas were put in prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. About midnight, they were singing hymns. Then an earthquake shook the jail and all the doors flew open. The jailor was about to kill himself, thinking all the prisoners had escaped, but Paul called to him, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here" (Acts 16:28-31).

The jailor rushed in and fell at Paul's feet. "What must I do to be saved?" he asked. Paul answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

THE FEAR OF DEATH

Most people don't know what makes them fear death, or why they are confused in life, or why they are bound by addiction to alcohol, drugs or other things that hurt them. They know that the things they cannot stop doing hurt their bodies, but they have no power in themselves to stop these evil practices. And, for them, death is the great unknown.

That why Jesus came... "He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

THE WESTERN CHURCH

Some people think the human race is advancing in wisdom and knowledge and getting better. Men and women are living longer they are getting more knowledge. Finding new medicines and other ways to help people live better lives. But they are also finding more ways to sink lower and lower into the things that hold them captive. Men and women are held fast in the kingdom of darkness, and only God can set them free.

If you read or listen to the news, you see that society is breaking down, governments crumbling and running up huge debts for later generations to have to pay back. Even some in the Christian Church have lost their way, accepting the ways of the world. They are not taking a stand against these evil practices.

People ask, "Where are our moral standards?" or, "What are we doing to our children?" In our schools, we are already teaching them our bad ways, ways of selfishness, greed and violence.

The truth is, we are not teaching them moral standards. Their consciences are confused. God gave every person, born on this planet, a conscience and the same amount of moral light (John 1:9). But as a society, we have largely rejected the truth of God's word and the moral standards He set before us, and are choosing to live by the opinions of wicked men. Men and women everywhere are asking, "What is this world coming to?" Many don't have the courage to do anything about it, or they just join in the corruption. Some choose the quick way out, leaving only a corpse for someone else to bury.

IT IS THE SAME IN ZAMBIA

"Things have not improved or changed for the better in Zambia," Timothy said. We are not proposing that Zambia is worse than any country, but only that we were introduced to its culture in 1994 by a world-class evangelist and Bible teacher.

In Africa, a whole range of social and moral issues face the supposedly advancing culture. But no one knows what to do about these issues. African Evangelical preachers plead with God to deliver their people from witchcraft and other social evils. But, the people in authority kick their nation's problems around, like an old tin can, they don't have the power, or the will, to try and solve the problems. They leave them for the children and grandchildren to face.

Good-intentioned missionaries from foreign lands expend their resources on a vast variety of projects, but the underlying culture remains the same.

"Even those who call themselves Christian, bring heathen practices right into their own lives and homes. They are adopted from the heathen cultures around them in the name of tolerance, unity and togetherness." Timothy told us.

TECHNOLOGY HAS NOT HELPED

Years later other leaders told us, "Our young people embrace the world of computers and cell phones with great excitement, but they misuse these resources. Young people send pictures of themselves nude to friends. This brings them sexual abuse and often death." Eugene Peterson takes words from the Book of Peter to describe the men of old who called themselves "teachers," but used their title to worm their way into the Christian churches and drag others down. The apostle Peter summed up (in Peterson's paraphrase) what the people on this planet earth would be like in our day and age.

"God is especially incensed against these 'teachers' who live by lust, addicted to a filthy existence... they prefer to live by self-rule. Insolent egotists, they don't hesitate to speak evil..."

"These people are nothing but brute beasts, born in the wild, predators on the prowl. In the very act of bringing down others with their ignorant blasphemies, they themselves will be brought down, losers in the end.... They are so despicable and addicted to pleasure that they indulge in wild parties in broad daylight. They're obsessed with adultery, compulsive in sin, seducing every vulnerable soul they come upon. Their specialty is greed, and they're experts at it. Dead souls!" (2 Peter 2:10-14, The Message, Eugene Peterson).

THE AFRICAN CHURCH

The African church has grown rapidly. It has known revival in the east when thousands were swept into the Christian Church. Yet for all its fervor the Church has not abandoned the evil customs of its forefathers. Some have explained church growth in Africa as “one mile wide and one inch deep.”

From birth to death, Satanic practices have dogged the footsteps of every person; not even dedicated Christians are free of their influence. This influence is strengthened by close family and tribal ties.

Pastor Timothy Chilufya shared many of his experiences with us as we sat in his spacious living room. He said this about the birth ceremony, “When I was born, relatives placed me on a banana leaf. No baby is named by his or her parents.

“All the close relatives had gathered for the occasion. They sat and waited for two or three days, expecting the Evil One to give them a name for the new-born child. In the middle of the night, one of my aunts got my name from an evil spirit. She heard the spirit speak the name; then she told the family. They were glad and worshipped the spirit of our ancestors.

“As a young man, I learned that the name given to me by my aunt was demonic. I denounced the name and cried out to Jesus for mercy. I had been afflicted by demons, but did not know why. After a long time and much prayer I was delivered from the demonic name.”

“You who are reading this can also be set free by the power of Jesus.”

WITCHCRAFT PASSED FROM FOREFATHERS

Witchcraft has been passed from generation to generation by headmen and others who practice it. People who do not know the Lord God, fear evil spirits and worship them. This results in confusion, hatred, dullness of mind, laziness and even death.

Confusion, hatred and fear are the products of witchcraft. Satan and his demons have the power to keep people in this bondage. But Jesus Christ has the greater power to deliver them from it (Hebrews 2:14-15).

God calls witchcraft a “detestable practice”. He said to His people Israel, “When you go into the land the Lord your God gives you, do not learn and follow the sinful ways of the nations. There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, or uses secret ways, or does witchcraft... or is a witch, or uses secret powers on people, or helps people talk to spirits, or talks to spirits himself or talks with the dead” (Deut 18:9-11; New Life Bible).

SPIRIT WORSHIP

Spirit worship has always been part of the African culture, because the people have no understanding of the true God. “Our forefathers believed that only the spirits had power. They thought that God was far, far away and could not be approached by man,” Pastor Timothy said.

But the Bible tells us there is only one Mediator between God and man - the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). Men do not need a spirit medium to help them come into God’s presence. All mediums are agents of Satan. God forbids us to seek them. He told Moses, “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead” (Deut 18:10-11).

Satan wants to be your mediator and stand between you and the living God. “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Cor 4:4). He has been successful, to a large extent, and most people live in fear, bondage and darkness because of evil spirits.

DEVIL WORSHIP

Christians must not attend ceremonies where people worship evil spirits (Deut 18:10-13). When you begin to dream about dead people, evil spirits are testing you. Demons can impersonate dead relatives or friends. Reject such dreams and claim the blood of Jesus over you to protect you. Ask God to give you a special Bible verse or promise from His word to protect you and strengthen your faith. He is your deliverer (2 Sam 22:2). He is your protection. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim 4:18). The prophet wrote: "the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear" (Isaiah 59:1).

EVIL OR UNHOLY THINGS

Timothy Chilufya observed, "I believe that, associated with every clan, there is an evil spirit that controls each extended family. Spirit worship is practiced through clan naming. It is passed from generation to generation by the naming of children. Because of this spirit worship, many of the extended family members have never known anything but sickness and poverty. They do not progress in health, peace of mind or freedom of conscience. "As long as Zambians are involved in witchcraft, they will lead their children into witchcraft and their extended families, communities and towns will follow, with the inevitable consequences."

IMMORAL LIFESTYLE

Among any people group involved in spirit worship, there is always immorality. From the earliest civilizations, prostitution was part of temple worship (Hosea 4:12-14). When Judah was ruled by Josiah, a righteous king, he tried to remove all the prostitutes from the land; he also destroyed the places of idol worship (2 Kings 23:4-14).

The spirit of sex demands a high price. The HIV-AIDS virus and many other sexual diseases, which are spread because of unfaithfulness, lead to shame, terrible sickness and an early death. This sequence has affected men and women worldwide, but particularly so in Africa. Many say that if a person has sex with a virgin it will cure their HIV-AIDS, these are terrible lies and Satan's way of spreading this disease. You will not be cured but you will infect the other person.

In 2007 the UN AIDS Center stated that over 5,700 people die of HIV-AIDS every day, mostly because they cannot afford the effective, relatively inexpensive drugs now available that could extend their lives.

Pastors in Africa spend half their week leading memorial services and burying the dead. And all the extended family are expected to be present at the funeral. Because of this, there is very little productivity. Those who do not have money to pay the fare to attend the burial ceremony, borrow from friends and incur debts they cannot pay back.

SHRINES AND SPECIAL ROOMS

Some village chiefs have special shrines where they bow and worship evil spirits. God hates this evil practice of consulting and honoring the spirits of the dead. I believe in chieftainship, but I am very concerned about chiefs who worship at the shrines of demons.

Demon-possessed people often keep a special room for this purpose. A plate of maize is placed on a white cloth in this room. Early each morning the person rises to worship the spirits. This is a great sin in the eyes of the Lord God who said, "I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:2-3). And again, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:4-5).

Some people keep idols in a special room and worship the idols each time they enter the room. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22).

Idols are carried through the streets and worshipped as they pass by. God hates these graven images; they bring His judgments on our homes and land.

God told His prophet to tell the people, "My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched" (Jeremiah 7:20).

This sin of idolatry affects your children and your grandchildren to the third and fourth generations. God wants you and your family to walk before Him with a humble heart seeking to do only those things that please Him and bring glory to His name. God said, "Be careful or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them" (Deut 11:16).

God gave Gideon and his handful of men a great victory over the Midianites. Even so, Gideon turned down an offer "to rule over Israel" (Judges 8:23). Rather, he requested the gold rings they had taken in plunder. The men spread out a garment on the ground and each man threw a ring from his plunder on to it with the gold chains they had taken from the camel's necks.

Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which was to be worshipped not worn by a priest. It became an idol and so the sin of idolatry continued in the land (Judges 8:22-28). And it proved to be the ruin of Gideon's family.

EVIL CEREMONIES

Spirit worship leads men and women to hell. But it is not too late to repent. God has given you this time to get rid of your shrines, your special rooms and your idols and to worship Him, the living God of heaven. You must repent of your evil doings, then you can be saved through Jesus the Savior, the only mediator between God and man.

Jesus said, "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

TATTOOS AND BODY PIERCINGS

When Moses stood before the people of Israel, he warned them; "You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, for you are a people holy to the LORD your God." (Deut 14:1-2).

After a week at the beach, my wife exclaimed, "I've never seen such horrible tattoos!"

Fathers covered with tattoos play with their children who accept them as harmless decorations. The children have never been told; they do not know the significance of giving blood to Satan, but that is what the body-piercing does!

The tattoo operator, who is no more than a servant of Satan, takes blood from the person being tattooed and offers it to Satan. If you did not know this and have a tattoo on your body, you should renounce Satan's claim on your life. Stand against this horrible mark on your body. Satan's power over you can and must be broken. Have your Christian friends gather around you and ask God to set you free by His Holy Spirit.

God wants you to have the mark of the Holy Spirit on your life (2 Cor 5:5; Eph 1:13). He will give you His Holy Spirit when you tell Him you are sorry for your sins and turn away from them. "For God so loved the world (of men and women) that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

CHARMS, RINGS AND FORTUNE TELLERS

Black magic, charms and jujus are an abomination to the Lord. People show off rings, necklaces and even white handkerchiefs which are white magic. Others carry charms which they believe will protect them from accident or sickness. These are Satan's toys. Fortune tellers have been with us since the dawn of history. Astrologers read the stars and interpreted omens in Babylon in the days of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar called them to his court to interpret his dreams (Daniel 2:2), but only Daniel could give the true interpretation because God had revealed to him the mystery and given him wisdom to "understand visions and dreams of all kinds," (Daniel 2:19, 23). Businessmen of Zambia don't need charms or jujus to grow their businesses. They need to be like Daniel, men of honesty and commitment, and honest character who can receive from God alone.

IDOL WORSHIP

The dark heart of any culture springs from the dark hearts of its people. There is no light of God in the heart. Instead, the hearts of the people are filled with every kind of deceit and wickedness. Paul wrote of them, "Although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Romans 1:21-23).

Western visitors may not be drawn to the idol worship which is such a prominent and visible part of heathen worship, but they are often tempted to bring home artifacts used in heathen ceremonies.

Beware! These things may look harmless enough, but they are just another way the enemy has of getting a foot in the door. Remember Paul's words: "Do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph 4:27).

A seasoned missionary was invited to watch a 'harmless' ceremony being performed by a native tribe in Australia. She had labored for many years. After the ceremony an ornate headdress was placed on her head in fun, "just to see how it looked."

In a short time, the missionary began to suffer from excruciating headaches which forced her to return home. She felt as if an iron band had been put around her head. She asked to be anointed and prayed for. Elders in her church prayed over her several times, but the headaches persisted. Such things are dedicated to Satan. They are part of the spirit-worship and are best left alone.

She had to go on leave, but wanted to get back to her ministry and in faith booked her plane ticket. Just before she was about to leave, her mother challenged the enemy "in the name of Jesus" (Mark 16:17) to release her daughter and God answered prayer. The missionary daughter left the house for the airport rejoicing in the victory won.

Let this be a warning to others who might think to watch a heathen dance or ceremony as a part of the tourist attraction, or they take home some novel item used by the dancers. Beware! The power of the enemy is great and who knows what you will be taking into your home.

JESUS KNEW SATAN'S POWER

Three times, Jesus spoke of Satan as "the prince of this world," (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world ... and said to Him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor...' if You worship me". Jesus did not dispute Satan's ownership but answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'." (Luke 4:5-8). Jesus knew Satan's power. He prayed that God, the Father, would protect all believers from Satan. In His prayer Jesus prayed for those who had been saved, and for all those who would be saved in the future. He prayed, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

Paul wrote this message of assurance to young Timothy who was setting out to be a preacher of the gospel, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18). This can only happen if we live close to the Lord, abiding in Him. Jesus Himself said, "Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine" (John 15:4-7).

JESUS CAST OUT DEMONS

In the New Testament, the Book of Mark tells how Jesus met a man possessed by an evil spirit. The man had come to the synagogue where the Jews worshipped God. Just as Jesus finished teaching, the man cried out, "What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!"

"Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him." The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of the man with a loud shriek (Mark 1:24-26).

The people were amazed. Some were drawn to Jesus by His power over evil. The Pharisees and teachers concluded that Jesus had done this by using Satan's power. They could not deny that a miracle had happened, but they would not believe that the power to work this miracle came from God.

The Pharisees pretended to cast evil spirits out of people. But only God working through His servants can do that. Shamans are paid large sums of money and goods to 'heal' persons who are possessed by evil spirits. Relatives and families sacrifice chickens, make special offerings and perform rituals, usually to no avail.

GOD'S POWER TO OVERCOME SATAN

After God sent His Holy Spirit into the hearts of the early Christians, there was revival. Believers saw at once that the sorcery they practiced and the magic arts they had been using to try to find guidance were of the devil.

In Acts we read, "They brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly" (Acts 19:19). The value of these scrolls and books was equal to many days' wages. God was pleased and blessed these early followers because they took this stand against witchcraft "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely."

God gave the apostles such power that even Peter's shadow, falling on a sick person, healed them. The special offerings, made by the shaman, cannot heal a sick person. Only God can heal the sick. The Bible instructs us, "Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church (men of faith and integrity) to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up . . ." (James 5:14-16).

We saw it with our own eyes. A brother living near to the Chilufya house was poisoned by a relative. As soon as word of his sickness reached the house, several rushed to his aid. The Holy Spirit said, "Give him milk," but the sister could not find milk in the house. Then she saw an egg. She quickly broke and beat it and gave it to the sick man to drink.

The little group prayed over him and anointed him. Soon after, he vomited a vile fetish and lay exhausted. Fearing reprisal they brought the brother back to the Chilufya house and made him comfortable on a mattress on the floor. The next morning he got up, fully healed, and drove his car to work. God had honored His word spoken in faith by His servants.

PASSAGE TO MANHOOD OR WOMANHOOD

Initiation rites have held a tight grip on heathen societies since the dawn of history. Boys are beaten and made to do things that only the devil could think of. Girls are 'circumcised' and many lose their lives in childbirth as a result. Satan is the master of cruelty and uses a hundred evil practices to hurry our young people to untimely deaths.

Some tribes dance all night to the beat of drums. They undress their young girls and force them to dance for hours. They are told things that do much harm to them in later life. The

Master-of-Ceremonies communicates with evil spirits as he seeks words of counsel for these young women. The words come from Satan. He is a murderer and the father of lies and no good thing comes from this evil practice (John 10:10). Pastors should speak out against all traditions that bring with them immorality, fear and confusion to our young people.

DEATH CEREMONIES

Bible says: "This body turns to dust, but the spirit of the person returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7). The dead person's spirit does not come back to haunt the house where he or she lived, nor to put a curse on anyone. It returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7).

While we were staying in Kabwe, the death of a believer drew our attention to the 'death ceremony'. This continued for a week. Those who don't know Christ don't understand death. They blame it on witchcraft, on some evil person putting a curse on the person. This is wrong. Death takes our loved ones because of natural causes and sickness. There is no "world spirit" other than Satan. Jesus called Satan "the Prince of this world" (John 12:31). The crowd of relatives who came to town for the week-long funeral took all the widow's resources (and more) to feed them. And they took all her possessions out of the house. God tells us to take care of widows and orphans, not take advantage of them in a time of grieving (James 1:27). A widow has every right to inherit her husband's property. In God's plan, husband and wife become one (Gen 2:24). The church everywhere needs to teach married couples to make a will which tells how the person wants his or her property divided and distributed to relatives after his or her death. A Will is a binding legal document. We cannot write here of the purification ceremonies which are forced upon the grieving widow or widower. Tradition says they must immediately sleep with someone before the ghost of the dead person is removed from the house. This tradition contradicts what the Bible teaches about marriage and purity. The Bible says, "marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4).

BURIAL CEREMONIES

Death is a great mystery, particularly to those who know nothing of the Bible truths. When Jesus Christ rose from the tomb, God sent two angels to tell His followers that He had risen! They spoke to the women who came to anoint His body. They found the tomb empty and the angels asked, "Why do you look for the living one among the dead" (Luke 24:5)? Timothy told us, "We worry about which way to face the head of the dead person at the burial site. Should it face east or should it face west? I am so glad I don't have to worry about which way my body faces when I am buried. I am a Christian and I know that, when Jesus comes on the clouds, my body will be caught up to be with Him, a glorious resurrected body" (2 Cor 5:8-10; 1 Thess 4:16-18).

OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED

The Bible also tells us that our days are numbered. Moses wrote, "The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty if we have the strength..." (Psalm 90:10). The Bible also says, "My times are in Your hand..." (Psalm 31:15). God knows how long each person will live. David who wrote Psalm 139 said, "All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16).

FALSE STORIES

Evil spirits, sent by Satan, spread rumors and false stories about honest godly people, especially Christian leaders. The stories are not true but are meant to destroy the person's reputation. Do not pass on a story about another person that you heard at the market, even

if you know it is true. Satan uses gossip and false stories to divide families and break up churches.

God commands Christians to “watch and pray” lest Satan get a foothold among us (Eph 4:27). Believers are one in Jesus Christ and God means us to have fellowship and enjoy each other.

WITCHDOCTOR RECEIVED JESUS

A missionary from a West African country told of an old witchdoctor. The missionary had told the old man the gospel story many times. Late one evening the witchdoctor sent word for the missionary to come to his compound.

It had been a long, hard day and the missionary hesitated. What could the old witchdoctor want?

After an inner struggle, the missionary put on his coat and went to the witchdoctor’s compound. When he arrived, he found the old man lying on a mat. The missionary could see that he was dying. Again he told the old man that he needed to repent of his sins and trust in Jesus. The old man listened, his eyes closed. Then he nodded his head and opened his eyes. A light shone in them that relatives kneeling around his bed had never seen before, and a strange peace settled across the old man’s face.

The old witchdoctor did not die that night, but lived on for three more days. And all that time, the light of God shone in his eyes. The people who came in from the village saw it. The light was the old man’s testimony. All who saw it agreed that the Lord had spared this old man for three days, so that others could know that God’s power is greater than the power of the evil spirits the witchdoctor had served all his life.

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

It is said that there are white lies and black lies. This is not true. “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices” (Col 3:9). Some also think there is petty stealing and serious stealing. God’s command covers all kinds of stealing. God said, “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:16).

Most people have been tempted to steal at some time in their lives. Some are tempted at their work place. They steal the boss’ time by writing emails to their friends, or they take a sick day to catch up on shopping or housework. Some take little things that they think won’t be noticed.

Employees who steal money out of the cash register usually get caught. There are many ways of stealing so the victim does not know. But you know you are a thief, and God knows.

GRAVES ARE MADE INTO SHRINES

Often, when a well-known shaman or ‘holy man’ dies and is buried, his grave becomes a shrine and people go to it to worship. They believe that by visiting the man’s grave, and by praying to his spirit, they can have the same powers the witch doctor had when he was alive.

In Japan it is called ‘Hakamaeri’. People visit the graves to worship the spirits of the dead. They waste what little money they have on gifts of food or garlands which they leave at the graveside. They leave these for the spirit of the dead person. But stray dogs usually find the food.

FIRE WALKERS

A newspaper in Japan printed a picture of a child being dragged through hot coals by his father. Priests and worshippers at the Nishichisan Temple in Tokyo watched as the child

screamed. The newspaper article said nearly 1,000 people walked barefoot through the smoldering coals.

Why didn't their feet get burned? Maybe they did, but probably the power of Satan protected them.

Fire walking is not uncommon in India and other near eastern countries. When asked why people do this, the observer is told, "to burn out evil passions".

But we know that evil passions come from "an evil heart of unbelief" (Heb 3:12 NKJV). Only God can change such a heart. He said, through His prophet Ezekiel, "I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will be careful to... keep My laws" (Ezek11:19).

ONLY ONE WAY TO GOD

There is only one way to have peace of mind and hope for the future. These things must come from God. Jesus Christ is our Mediator. He stands before the Father on our behalf. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). He also said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things [things that you need] will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33). There is only one name which has power to take away our sins; only one name that can heal our sick bodies. That name is Jesus. The Bible says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So Paul told the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved - you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

There is only One who stands between you and a holy God: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

This is the truth. Cry out to Jesus. Ask Him to save you from your sins and make you a new person. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old [way of living and worshipping the devil] has gone, the new has come! All this is from God...." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

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