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Built to Perfection

Designed by God

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Chapter 1

The Foundation

The first day a contractor arrives on the job, he sees a cleared lot prepared for a beautiful home. What was once a piece of land lacking design and care, has now been cleared of the trees and underbrush that inhibited building. The ground that was hard has now been broken up for easy digging.

The builder gets out of his truck and unrolls the blueprints on the hood. The first page declares the architect's name and is embossed with his stamp of approval. A picture of a beautiful home is drawn in full. Every detail is included in the papers on the hood. He knows from the beginning the size and shape, the number of rooms, the colors of the walls, the tile and flooring, and even the type of plants surrounding the house.

"It's going to take time to build it right", he thinks to himself. No cutting corners. The architect is willing to invest as much time and effort as necessary to have a home that will beyond a lifetime. This will be another showpiece for him. Everything in the home needs to be quality. There's to be no skimping on material. With the right people helping him, he knows there will soon be a beautiful home on this site.

After another drink of coffee, he starts walking the now empty lot. He has a picture of a home that will soon be standing before him, but where does he begin? He starts with the foundation. This is not only the first step in constructing a home, it's the most important. He knows that if the foundation isn't strong, the building will collapse when storms come.

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It takes time to lay a perfect foundation, but everything else depends on it. If it's not level, it will be difficult to straighten later. If it's weak, the home could collapse one day, possibly causing great harm. If he doesn't take his time and do it right, the whole project will be delayed.

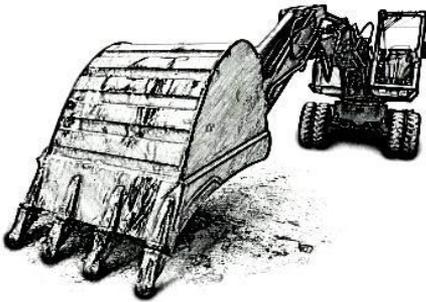
God is the architect of our lives. He designed the final product and knows every detail. Before being born again, our lives lack the beauty that God brings. Unruly growth blocks the light and it seems like chaos abounds. As the Holy Spirit begins to work in our lives, a clearing begins to emerge. What was once the hard ground of our hearts becomes soft and manageable.

When we accept Jesus as our Savior, God has a freshly cleared lot on which to build. He looks at the surroundings in our lives and designs a beautiful home that blends with the others around it. Every one He builds is a masterpiece. It is specially designed to accomplish His purpose. The Holy Spirit takes God's plan and begins building the foundation of our lives. Each phase of construction is given great attention to detail. Nothing is left undone.

The finished product of our lives cannot be rushed. God knows that the foundation must be laid accurately. He takes all the time necessary to do it right. Jesus described the importance of a sure foundation in Matthew 7:24-27 (NLT).

"Anyone who listens to My teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the flood waters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears My teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

Building a home on top of the dirt would save time and energy. It takes time to dig down to solid rock. You may run into roots, clay, or rocks. Time may pass and you will wonder if the building will ever make progress. But it is worth the effort. A life firmly placed on the rock of God's Word will stand. A person who doesn't take the time to establish the principles Jesus taught will come to a sudden and disastrous end.



The builder digs down through all the layers of earth until he reaches bedrock. Anything less than rock may wash away when storms come, leaving a hole below the structure. If there are too many holes or the ground

washes out under the corner of the building it could collapse. Not only would the building be lost, but the people within may be hurt or killed.

If a person doesn't take time to allow the Holy Spirit to dig through all the poor building material above the bedrock, they may discover holes in their walk with God. If the holes are large or in important areas of their lives, a fall may occur. Not only will the person suffer loss, others who depend on them could be hurt, possibly severely.

Everything the Holy Spirit builds into our lives must last for eternity. God knows that in order to build a life right, the proper foundation must be laid. Everything we learn, every challenge we face is part of the process of building a life that will serve God for the rest of time. God uses the people and

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circumstances in our lives to test each phase of construction for strength and durability.

In order to build properly, a strong foundation must first be established in your life. With a proper knowledge of God and His principles, your life will have a foundation that will withstand any storm. Having to rebuild a foundation can be difficult, it's important to be established in God's truths from the beginning. Take your time. Learn these truths. There is no rush. God wants you firmly grounded in His Word prior to building the beautiful home your life will be. With the proper foundation laid, He will be able to build properly and you will have the best opportunity to accomplish all that Christ has for you to do.

Chapter 2

The Right Measurements

To begin constructing a foundation, a crew must first survey the lot. Their job is to mark out exactly where the home will be built. They use the measurements they've been given to drive a stake into the ground at each corner of the house. The lead surveyor peers through the transit. The telescope allows him to see the measuring rod his partner is holding on the other side of the property.

Having been adjusted for level, he uses the cross-hairs inside the transit to determine where to mark each stake. Their work must be precise. If the marks are not level, the future structure could end up leaning awkwardly or collapsing. Fixing it later may be very difficult.

The surveying stakes the Holy Spirit uses to map out your life is *God's love for you*. Everything you believe is determined by your understanding of His love. The foundation of your life as a



Christian, is measured from the marks on these stakes. It's critical to know that God is passionately in love with you!

Paul said in 1 Cor 13:13, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Love has to be the survey marks in every life being built by God; but it's not just an knowledge of *love*. The straightness of your foundation is solely dependent on your understanding of *God's love for you*. All the

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other areas of your life will be built in line with your foundation. If your understanding of God's love is straight and true, every other area of your life will be aligned properly.

John knew about God's love for him. In John 3:16 he quoted Jesus saying, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." And in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." These two statements show how much God loves us. He and Jesus were both willing to suffer for our sakes, just because they loved us.

Many people have heard about God's love. But these same people don't truly believe that God loves *them*. They may believe that God loves them sometimes, but they aren't convinced that God is in love with them all the time. John went on to say in another letter to the Church, "This is real love — not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." (1 John 4:10 NLT).

God's love for us is not based on our ability to love Him. It has never been a performance - or obedience - based love. 1 John 4:8 says, "God is Love." Love is who He is. It is all He knows how to do. At every moment in time, God expresses love toward us.

Dr. Ed Cole defined love this way, "Love is the desire to benefit others at the expense of self, because love desires to give. On the contrary, lust is the desire to benefit self at the expense of others, because lust desires to get." God's desire has always been to bless us. That's why He sent Jesus to die for us.

Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" If God is waiting for us to express love toward Him through obedience before He shows His love to us, then Jesus died needlessly. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died

for us” (Rom 5:8). The reason God loves us is simply because He wants to. He doesn’t love us only if we love Him. He loves every person ever born, even the ones that refuse His love and die without Him.

John referred to himself several times as, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John knew that God’s love for him was based on God loving him, not on his ability to love God. If you think God doesn’t love you because you haven’t loved him, you are basing God’s love on your performance. In that case, you are limited to receive from God only what you’ve earned.

“We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Your love for God is an expression of gratitude. Your ability to love Him never impacts His love for you. He is love, and will love you forever, regardless of your response. He will always love you, even when you don’t deserve it.

Your life in God must start by knowing that God loves you unconditionally. The Holy Spirit can then measure from that mark to build a beautiful home. Having your foundation straight makes it much easier to align the rest of the building.

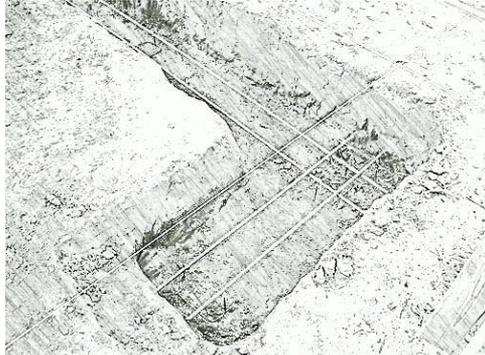
Chapter 3

The Strength

The builder sets up two sawhorses and lays a piece of plywood on top. Unrolling the blueprints on his makeshift table, he searches the pages until he finds the details for the footer. It's the next step in building a strong foundation.

The footer is poured concrete, reinforced with steel. The workers dig trenches wider than the walls they will hold, and deep enough to assure the building is sitting on firm ground. Long steel rods, rebar, are laid in the trenches. Concrete is then poured around the reinforcements. With the rods encased in concrete, a strong, durable footer is in place. The perimeter of the house is now prepared to bear the weight of the structure.

Without the rebar in the middle of the concrete, the footer would be weak. The weight of the wall could crack the footer and allow the wall to settle into the ground. A crack could soon form in the wall above, creating a weak point in the home.



The strength in a Christian's foundation comes from knowing that *they are forgiven and cleansed from all sin*. Jesus came to remove not only the debt of sin, but also the constant reminder of having sinned. Being conscious of our sin weakens a Christian's ability to believe God loves them. A believer who doesn't know they are righteous and pure in God's eyes, is like a footer without rebar in it. They have a foundation, but it can be

cracked, allowing weak areas in their lives.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they were separated from God. Instead of being like God and having his nature, they received a sin nature. They covered themselves with fig leaves, attempting to hide the shame of sin. 2

Corinthians 5:21 says Jesus took away our sin. He removed our sin nature by becoming sin for us. In return, we receive God's nature and His righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The sin nature you once had is now gone. It has been replaced with God's nature; just like what Adam and Eve had before they sinned. When you are born again, you receive God's nature. Your old nature that followed Satan (or self), is gone. You have a new nature, one that desires to follow God (1 John 3:9).

Every person has a spirit, a soul, and a body. God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and you are a spirit. Though you live in a body (while on this earth) and you have a soul (mind, will, and emotions) the real you is your spirit. It is the part of you that communicates with God. When you receive Jesus, your spirit is new. Your soul, on the other hand, has to be made new. It is renewed by studying and listening to God's Word (Romans 12:1-2). The third part of you, your body, remains the same.

Your new spirit is now clean and pure; free from every contamination left behind by the world. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Your body and soul may still have tendencies toward the world (that will change as your spirit develops), but the real you is righteous and pure before God.

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1 John 1:5 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” If anything pertaining to our old nature (darkness) were in us, God’s Spirit couldn’t dwell in us, because light and darkness can’t exist in the same place. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

When Jesus died on the cross, he paid the debt for all our sins. Colossians 2:13 (NLT) says, “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins.” His sacrifice paid for all our sins. Our account has been made completely clean of debts. We can no longer have anything charged to our account.

“All our sins” means every sin: past, present, and future. There is nothing, nor can there be anything ever held against us. All our unrighteousness was removed, leaving us righteous before God.

Every sin has been forgiven, but what about the guilt and shame? Was it taken by Christ also? Satan is called the “accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:10). He continues to accuse us, even though there is nothing with which we can be charged. The sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament atoned for the people’s sins but failed to clean their conscience. The only way to stand against Satan’s accusations now is to know that you are both forgiven and cleansed. The Blood of Christ both removes sin and cleanses the conscience (Hebrews 9:14).

The word “righteous” means, “proven or shown to be innocent; found to be faultless, guiltless and acceptable to God.” By the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf, we can boldly stand before God, knowing that all our sins are forgiven and we have

been made clean and pure in His sight. Act forgiven. Live like you are righteous. Stand in the presence of the enemy and declare that you are guilty of nothing.

Just like the rebar strengthens the concrete in the footer, knowing that you are righteous gives you boldness in your walk with God. It gives a strength to your faith and guards against weak areas in your life. Having a clean conscience makes the devil's accusations ineffective. Being guilt-free empowers your authority. And living without regrets causes your relationship with God to flourish.

Chapter 4

The Support

After the reinforcements in the footer have been inspected, the workers fill it with concrete. As soon as it's dry, they can start preparing to pour the foundation slab. The contractor starts by building a concrete block wall on top of the footer. The top of the wall has to be the same height as the slab.

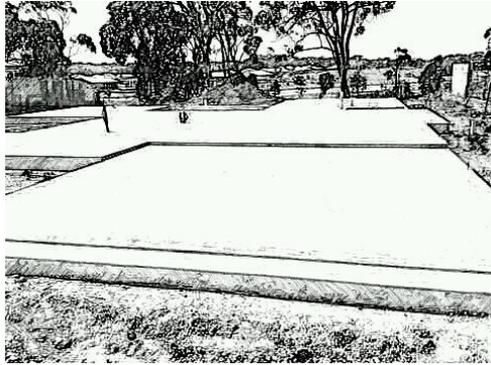
Once the wall is finished, dirt is brought in to fill the foundation. Workers compact the soil so the slab won't crack later. Other trades, like electricians and plumbers, install pipes in the dirt. Using the blueprints they carefully measure where the walls will be built later. They extend the pipes out of the ground in the exact location they will be needed. When the underground work is complete, a chemical specialist sprays the dirt to prevent termites. Plastic is then laid over the treated earth.

When the concrete slab is poured it has to be reinforced. In some cases they use stiff wire and at other times they use fiber in the concrete. A quick check of the blueprints tells the contractor which one to use. With that determined, he measures the slab and orders the concrete.

The morning the concrete arrives can be very busy. Workers hurry to get the concrete poured in a timely fashion. Multiple trucks have to be moved into position and emptied. The concrete has to be leveled and smoothed before it becomes too hard. By the end of the day a smooth foundation slab sits in the middle of the property waiting for the walls of the home to begin.

There's a lot that goes into pouring a foundation. Making sure it's level, compacting the dirt, installing the underground pipes, treating the soil, reinforcing the concrete, and finally pouring a

flat, smooth slab. Each step is important. When Jesus died on the cross, all the work for our salvation was finished. At that time, we were forgiven of all our sins, set free from the power of evil, healed of all our diseases, given an abundant supply, and equipped for the work God has called us to do. Nothing was left undone.



Everything in a house rests on the foundation. The walls, cabinets, the appliances, and even the furniture depend on it for support. There's no effort on their part. The foundation easily supplies the strength to hold them up. The foundation we rest on is *God's grace*. In every area of our lives, we rest in the finished work of Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Grace is a gift. You don't have to earn it. Everything God gives us is free. He doesn't require anything in return. Jesus sacrificed His life so we could have salvation as a gift.

Romans 3:24 says we were made righteous "by His grace." Grace is always undeserved and unearned. It's a gift (Romans 5:17). If a person works for something, it can't be given to him as a gift; he earned it. Salvation can't be earned. It is given to anyone who believes Jesus died in their place. Even though we did nothing to merit His love, we receive it like we do a gift. When you believe you are saved by grace (undeserved and

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unearned favor), God considers (counts) you as righteous (Romans 4:2-5).

“Having been justified [to be made righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2). Grace is received by faith. You simply believe it to be true. There’s no work. It’s not based on your ability. It’s always based on what Christ did.

Under the Old Covenant, righteousness was based on their ability to keep the law. No one was successful in earning their salvation. When Christ died, He fulfilled all the conditions of the Law and “wiped out the handwriting of requirements,” “nailing them to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). Everything the Law said we must do or not do was satisfied. The work is finished.

In Ephesians 1:7 we see that, “We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”. It’s not according to our obedience of the Law. Galatians 2:21 says, “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” No one has ever been able to earn salvation by keeping the Law. Jesus bought our salvation with His own blood and gave it to us as a gift. Attempting to earn His favor would be saying, “It wasn’t necessary, I can earn it.”

It’s humbling to receive a gift that you can’t pay back. James 4:6 says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” You don’t have to earn God’s favor. And you don’t have to pay him back, either. It took grace to get saved and you stay saved by grace. Praying more, reading your Bible more, or doing more for God won’t cause God to love you more. God’s love for you comes by grace. It’s a gift and requires no effort on your behalf.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us to, “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”. When you rest in God’s unearned favor, life will seem easy. There will be a peace on the inside. You can boldly trust in the work of Christ. Just like the walls of a house don’t work to stay up (they simply rest on the foundation), we don’t strain to have God’s favor. We simply rest on the foundation of God’s grace.

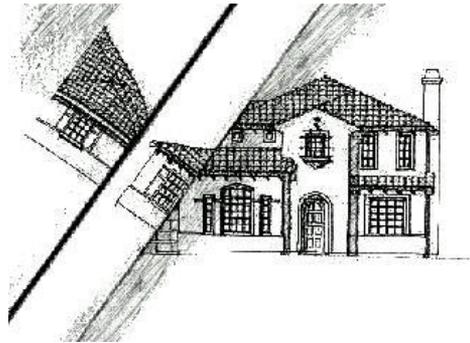
Chapter 5

Confidence

With the foundation set, the builder returns once again to the blueprints. As he turns the pages he sees the architect's perfect will for the home, from the first stages of the foundation to the last days of landscaping. It shows him the size and place for every wall, the details of how to build that wall, and the color and finish it will have. Every piece of information, from the engineering to the design, is described in the blueprints.

God gave us a blueprint for our lives, His Word. In the Bible we can find every detail of His perfect will for our lives. He took great care to describe His desire for us. He wants us to be in health, prosper, and live victorious. Just as the builder constantly refers to the blueprints for direction on how to build the home, we too must refer to God's Word for the steps we are to take as we mature in Christ.

Having the blueprints as his guide, the builder confidently lays out the rooms. He knows exactly how wide and how deep to make each of them. He doesn't question himself, wondering if it's the architect's will



for him to build the wall here, or there. The blueprints give him the assurance he needs to build with confidence.

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT) says, "Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see." Even though the architect doesn't come to the

jobsite, the builder can have confidence in his work because he has the blueprints. We, too, can have an assurance about God's plan for our lives because we have His Word.

Faith is confidence in God's Word. God declares His will in His Word. When we discover one of His promises in the Bible we can act on it with an absolute assurance that He will bring it to pass. Even when the natural circumstances are contrary to what God said, we place our confidence in Him and act as if we fully expect it to happen, and it does.

God formed the world that we see from things we can't see (Hebrews 11:3). The things that we see in the natural realm came from God's realm, the spirit realm. Even-though we can't see the spirit realm, it is very real. 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."

God caused the unseen things to become seen when He spoke. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. We, too, bring the things of the spirit into the natural by speaking. When we declare the promises of God to be real, the things we are not able to see in the natural become visible. God brings his will to pass when we believe it, speak it, and act on it in faith.

2 Corinthians 4:13 says, "I believed and therefore I spoke." Paul called this a "spirit of faith." In Mark 11:22-23 Jesus said, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says." When you are truly believing, the things you say will happen.

The confidence to believe the things promised by God will replace your current circumstances comes from knowing God's

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will. Faith comes by hearing God's Word for your situation (Romans 10:17). God's Word is His will. When you study and meditate on verses in the Bible, they will come alive to you. It's like the light suddenly turning on inside you (Psalm 119:130). What was once hidden in darkness is now made crystal clear by the light. It was there all the time, but you didn't see it until the light was turned on.

God reveals His will to us through His Word. When the Holy Spirit makes God's will alive to you, there will be a confidence to act on it. Even if people and circumstances say you can't, your heart assures you, what you now believe to be true will come to pass.

Peter found himself in a situation like this. He was in a boat with the other disciples during a storm, when Jesus walked up to the boat.

Seeing Jesus walking on the water, Peter asked if he could get out of the boat and walk to him. In the natural it's impossible to walk on water. What gave Peter the confidence to step out of the boat? It was Jesus' answer, "Come." When God speaks, you can act, no matter what the natural circumstances dictate.

After exiting the boat and walking partway to Jesus, Peter became overwhelmed by the storm and waves around him. Fear gripped him and instead of walking on the water, he was now sinking. Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up on top of the water. He asked Peter, "Why did you doubt?"

James 1:6-8 uses another term for doubt, "double-minded." Jesus told Peter to, "Come." The wind and the waves were telling him he should have stayed in the boat. Peter's heart said he could trust Jesus. His mind kept pointing to the

storm. He was “double-minded.”

Your mind will try to give you every reason why you can't. Fear will hold you back and cause you to fail. Faith gives you the confidence to act on the Word of God when everything and everyone around you is screaming it won't work. When you become certain of God's will, you will “walk by faith, not by sight,” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Peter's lack of faith affected his ability to walk on water. Jesus told two blind men, “According to your faith let it be to you,” (Matthew 9:29). God's willingness and ability to perform miracles wasn't questioned. It was the person's belief. Matthew 9:22 says, “Your faith,” and Luke 5:20 says, “Their faith.” These two passages also point out the importance of the individual's faith.

In order for God's will to be brought from the unseen into the seen, we have to believe. It isn't about God's ability or desire, it's about our willingness to trust His Word and act on it. If we don't act, nothing will happen.

What gives people the boldness to step out on God's Word? It's faith. What is faith? It is confidence in God's Word. When the Holy Spirit illuminates a specific Bible passage, or speaks to your heart, you have an extraordinary ability to speak and act on God's promises. The only way to have this assurance is to know God's will with certainty. The builder knows the architect's desires because he has the blueprints. We know God's perfect will because we have His Word. When you find out what His Word says, you can act on it. You can be certain it will come to pass because it's His will.

Chapter 6

What does it mean to be Saved

A lot of planning goes into building a house. Before you start you have to decide the style, number of rooms, how many bathrooms, the size of the garage, and whether to have a pool or not. It's important to include as many details as you can from the beginning. If you wait until later, modification might be necessary to accommodate the changes.

As the architect designs the plans, he knows to include the basic features, spaces for a refrigerator and stove, washer and dryer hookups, and cabinets with sinks. He may go beyond the basic requirements and include items for the home. Maybe giving you blinds for the windows, fans in each room, and a garage door opener. In an "everything's included" home, granite counter tops, stainless steel appliances, hardwood floors, and a security system come with the house.

When you were born again, God gave you a home with "everything included." Eternal life, health, deliverance, safety, wholeness, and provision all come



with salvation. God planned for us to prosper and have health in every area of our lives (3 John 2). Everything we need for an abundant life is included in salvation. He went beyond giving us the basics, He gave us His quality and magnitude of living (John 10:10).

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The word “life” is used as the English translation for the original Greek word “Zoe.” Zoe means, “God’s absolute fullness of life,” (Thayer’s Greek Definitions). He gave that standard of living to you when you accepted Jesus as your savior. Salvation is an “everything’s included” package.

Paul wrote in Romans 10:9, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The Greek word for “saved” is “sozo.” It has an all-inclusive definition. Being “saved” includes with it life, health, deliverance, safety, wholeness, and provision. Everything necessary for a joyous life in Christ has been incorporated into salvation.

The word “sozo” is translated into English using a number of different words. Each English word helps explain the different facets of salvation. In 2 Timothy 4:18 the word “preserve” is used for “sozo.” To preserve means, “protect from perishing, keep alive, and to make it last.” Part of the definition of being saved includes God protecting your life from destruction.

In Acts 4:19 Paul said the crippled man had faith to be “healed.” The Greek word for healed is “sozo.” God included salvation for your body in His plan. This man was restored to health after hearing the Gospel preached.

On another occasion Jesus set a man free from a legion of demons. The Bible tells the story in Luke 8. Verse 36 says this demon-possessed man was “delivered.” This, too, is the Greek word “sozo.” With salvation you have deliverance from all demon activity as well.

The Greek word “sozo” is also defined as safety. In Matthew 8:25 the disciples awoke Jesus asking Him to save their lives

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from the severe storm. Everyone born again can also expect to be rescued from danger.

Part of salvation is being set free, but it also includes restoration. The lady healed in Matthew 9:22 was not only set free from her disease, but was restored to life. She had been cut off from part of society because of her illness. She could now live a whole life within the community. This is another example of the use of “sozo.”

When God orchestrated salvation through Christ, He provided everything we would need in order to have a prosperous life. The curse on our lives was lifted and blessings began to flow (Galatians 3:13). God provided for every area of our lives.

Salvation is not just a plan allowing us to spend eternity in Heaven. It is for this lifetime. While on Earth you are to experience the excellence of God’s lifestyle. It should overflow in your daily life. The architect included the finest quality products in the home, everything the owner would ever need. God, too, gave us an all-inclusive package in the plan of salvation.