Reflections on

Psalms 16

A Theology of Pleasure

Running over, running over. My cup is full and running over

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May all who read receive the anointing of JOY and have it rubbed in till it becomes as a permanent fruit of their character. Amen.

Foreword and Afterword

(Read twice)

The dualist vision of a sacred / secular world contributes to moral confusion. This treatise makes no such distinction and defeats the left brained attempt at understanding through categorization. Somethings are simply not divisible. As the Hebrew sages said, "The Lord thy God is ONE". In the Beginning (now and forevermore), that ONE was the Word (*Uni-verse*)….and that Uni-verse / One Word **was** (and is) GOD. There is none besides (separate / apart from) Him.

Moral clarity, the ability not only to distinguish between good and evil, but having distinguished, to appropriately select between the two, results from this particular insight that enjoins, rather than distinguishes Cosmos from Theos.

In **Running Over**, the focus on human and divine intent (as opposed to action which can complicate things), is to better understand the moral contentions of our day and access a strategy of moral empowerment. Playing the 'blame game' – whether directed inwardly or outwardly, is ultimately a morally bankrupt management system.

Responsibility (the ability to respond to moral imperatives) requires a deeper understanding of self and society than given to us through the law / sin / punishment paradigm commonly exegeted from Judeo Christian and Islamic sacred scriptures…. an understanding that locates God (reason, purpose, beauty) at the center of both (self and society).

Fear of punishment may arguably dis-incentivize the breaking of law, but modern cities need a renewed philosophy of Law to deal with hybrid metropolitan centers with diverse sources of value traditions and identities. The purpose of law in human society is to produce harmony, not uniformity.

The cities of men, like the garden of God should celebrate difference, not smother it. Indeed whenever this is attempted and the flower of human liberty is aggressively choked by state or religious power, the city will become a wasteland rather than an oasis.
It is the premise of the author that, a deeper and clearer picture of humanity and divinity is portrayed in Jesus as presented in the gospels, that allows for a more accurate understanding of human motivation and potential.

Many of our Penal institutions could be replaced by *'Renal' institutions if this picture were to be properly understood. (*You may understand both pun and context after reading chapter 3.*) We need more 'unitive' than punitive measures to restore balance in our communities- decrimination not recrimination. Instruction is the cure for folly, not law.

In short, Jesus invites us to a joyful journey of inwardly desired, internally motivated adaptation as we encounter the challenge of living conscience-free in a complex world, fraught with conflicts of thought, ways and assumptions.

Our civil institutions (state, religious, educational, economic, legal) tasked with regulating sharply conflicting interests seek to control both self and society. Alas the attempt to forcefully control the human spirit (regardless how noble the rationale) generally leads to its *depreciation*.

An accurate portrait of Jesus in the gospels demonstrates his *appreciation* of human identity. Connected to the Unified Source of all variety, His Father Who 'created all things for His Pleasure', Jesus understood instinctively how to meaningfully engage across the wide spectrum of people groups and their distinct systems of tradition, belief and values.

The fact remains, notwithstanding the many compelling reasons for the defense of human traditions, we constantly evolve new structures and ideas as we grow in our understanding of ourselves and our surroundings. Our institutions must allow for growth and when they do not, we will burst their barriers blindly. The question is, is our future to be arrived at by blind compulsion or caring oversight? We choose.

Every parent understands the age old methods of reining in unwarranted behavior. These insights have been incorporated into our theology, our philosophy of law, our systems of Governance, our Macro-economic Theories etc.

The following reflections seek to overturn the conventional understanding which casts negative value on pleasure in general and ascribes virtue (or utility) to pain; an understanding not devoid of truth, but limited in scope and increasingly unhelpful in several contexts now emerging on the landscape of the development of human civilization.

Theologically, it also hopes to serve as a tool of balance in the modern wrestling over the issues of law and grace, central nerve of debate at present for the precise reason that – the pendulum is swinging between Garden and City, Eden and the New Jerusalem, between that which is first and that which comes last: the cycles of human civilization that oscillate between gestation and maturity, or as so aptly expressed in the phrase 'the rise and fall of kingdoms'.

The Light that illumines our path, giving us understanding of both who and where we are in this vast cosmic scheme, (in which we often forget our entire civilization appears, occupying the space time equivalent of so much less than a single raindrop in an ocean) dictate that the equation of liberty and truth be kept up to date in our experience. If we are losing balance, our revelation is out of sync with the One Spirit of both Truth and Liberty. May the hungry find bread in what follows:-

1. Desire, Delight and Decision

Running Over Running Over. My cup is full and running over

Psalms 16:1 ***Preserve me O God; I have put my trust in you.***

David. The man chasing after God's own heart; God's closest friend in the Old Testament. The great warrior king that Israel chose to eulogize as "the sweet psalmist of Israel". What moved him?

Interestingly, at the beginning and near the end of the psalm, David is concerned with ME. With the preservation of ME. The continuation and salvation of ME. Not at all the altruist one would expect from God's favorite. Even Moses, great as he was, was not considered as close to the heart of God although he was ready to go to hell for God's chosen.

David's passion for God, for life, for Israel, was solidly grounded in self-love. A robust ego - without which one can never learn truly the love of God or the love of others. Moses' insecurity was a constant thorn in the flesh causing him either to over or underperform.

A healthy ego knows its desires…..and pursues them. Always a passionate man; David's desires always led to his dilemmas, even after surrendering his ego in full service to the nation and God of Israel. Rest assured, whenever you move towards something passionately, you create waves. Strong determination in any pathway generates its own resistance…very often commensurate with the intensity of pursuit.

If you, like David, are passionate about anything, then you will understand this opening plea for preservation instinctively. Our passions create our problems. And they can overwhelm us at times. Many have burnt in the fires of their own passions (whether good or evil).

***O my soul, you have said unto the Lord you are my Lord*. (a choice, a commitment is made) My goodness is nothing apart from you. And as to the *saints* that are in the earth (His chosen), the excellent ones, IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT.**

It interests me that *before* David talks about his heart's delights, he talks about his soul's decision. When we are mature enough, we realize that we *choose* our pleasures. Our decisions *are* our delights. Own them. (i.e. take responsibility for them) This might not be apparent to the young at heart. Only very old souls who have had their fill of being beguiled by the mysterious depths of the human heart will see this clearly. If you don't get this now, move right along.

David knew what (or rather ***who***) God delighted in - and he made that (or **them**) his *own* delight. (Making it one's pleasure to delight another….talk about a recipe for sexual, social and spiritual satisfaction!)

Delight in your gifts by using them in service. Whatever it is you have been called to do and give, that is the proof of your abundance. Your sufficiency. Your fullness.

You can give something! Delight in that. This is evidence of your fullness.
Do you teach? Absorb yourself in delighting your students. You sing, paint or dance? Lose yourself in your creative expression. Objectify your adequacy by looking outwards in creative activities, or certify your insufficiency by looking in at self from the vantage point of apparent outside wealth and comparing with famine within.

Worship God in truth by *passionate giving* and living.
Express your love for God by *loving those He loves*.
Honor the Creator by *caring for His creation*.

Give and stir up your joy. For your cup is full whether you know it or not. Your belly is bursting with endless streams.

Give and discover your joy. Focus on yourself and your needs and lose it. One can be joyful looking down the barrel of a gun or waiting for a lion to devour your flesh....what are you focusing on? It fills your heart. with fear, sorrow or with joy.

We are the living expression of an abundant caring God. We are bread to the hungry. Water to the thirsty and breath to the dead. Let's Lose ourselves in giving and in so doing find the abundance of the Christ in us. Amen.

2. Lines (laws and limits)

Running Over Running Over. My cup is full and running over

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god;
Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,
Nor take up their names on my lips.

5 O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You maintain my lot.

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Yes, I have a good inheritance.

Life begins, continues, takes shape, and is what it is because of the URGE.

Desire defines all movement, all growth, all activity and all formation. From the cellular/molecular level - it is the desire for food that causes the amoeba to move in a specified direction. We are all chasing after something. Our systems evolve pleasure as an internal motivator towards an external goal.

Science has just begun to explore the relationship between what was once called inert matter and consciousness, hence explaining the connection between desire and design using exclusively scientific lexicon is difficult – but for those who need scientific sanction to ground their belief system, the experiments of *Dr. Vladimir Poponin that led to what is popularly called The DNA Phantom Effect and the other DNA experiments and research work of Russian biophysicist, Pjotr Garjajev are a place to start. (When considered along with other Quantum Physics discoveries, an undeniable and demonstrably causal, though mysterious connection between conscious observer and observed reality blurs the lines between subject and object, making very plausible our inferred connection between desire and design, and calls for a complete overhaul in our neuro-biochemical Theory of Consciousness)

A much simpler allusion is derived from sacred literature in the metaphor of the restless brooding of the spirit (divine desire) over the dark waters (inert chaotic matter) before the orgasmic, creative explosion of ‘Let there be Light!’ (Divine Design) in Gen 1.

The life force has its greatest urge in continuity. In more life. Life naturally seeks eternity / transcendence, although science describes this as mere *survival*. But survival does not explain growth. It explains hunger (sustenance), sex (self-perpetuation / reproduction), and power seeking (control) but not growth..... Growth is the quest for ascendancy and eventually transcendence. The soul's longing for eternity.

Pleasure and Pain are internal messengers. That's what angels are. Energy/Information messengers. Conveyors of Divine Knowledge (in-tuition /inner instructions) and Divine Power. Catalysts assisting us in the pursuit of some direction. Pleasure and pain tell us where we are

with respect to some intended goal....and urge us or discourage us on a particular path with respect to that goal.

Satiation (the fulfillment of desire) is what fuels our energies towards food / sex / knowledge / wisdom / or any aspect of the fruit of the tree of Life. Frustration is what gives us the signal to recalibrate our direction, or intensify our efforts, because no human being or any other life form naturally moves towards pain and eschews pleasure.

*Their **sorrows** shall be multiplied that chase after another God.*

David recognized the basic human drama: The accurate alignment of choice with delight (satiation). Decision with Desire. Get this right, and reap delight. But to choose wrongly is to 'multiply sorrow'.

Every man's way is right in his own eyes. Every man's gods seem worthy of trust /and every man's goals worthy of pursuit (same difference). How do we appropriately select what we chase after? We all seek the same things. What is it then to chase after *another* God? We all know there is only One.

But, in the world of womb to tomb, we cannot escape decision and judgment – right/wrong, good/evil; the dual world where choice and consequence defines our space/time journey both for ourselves and those who share it with us and also those who will remember us after we're gone.

For some the difference between day and night, good and evil, seems like a huge chasm. But often the lines are thin and blurred.

Take any controversial moral issue – abortion, genetic manipulation, gay marriage, war, etc. Choose any. Find the most capable proponents and opponents on the various sides of the debate and listen long enough both to their logic and to their passion till you can adequately and effectively represent either side in court.

You then will more fully understand the human predicament. The scriptures explain that the human heart is so dark, it takes laser sharp light to penetrate and analyze it.

Thank God for David's clarity, produced by the mercy of Israel's covenant with Yahweh. Their national identity pact. Their binding 'I AM' choices.

...You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Yes, I have a good inheritance.

But the LAW. We all wrestle with law - moral prescriptions – no matter who, what or where is the source. Especially when the law would place restraint on our desires. Shall we suppress our inner urges to conform with external sanctions? or rebel and pursue unbridled (Unbounded/ 'unboundaried') pleasure anyway?

Understanding territory is understanding boundaries. Limits. Lines. All this over here is mine. I can do whatever I want within these limits. But don't trespass over there. This is off limits. That is the LINE. The limit. The Law or rule establishes the boundaries. The metaphor of land lots is quite appropriate especially in the light of the advances in modern neuro-science.

The brain has now been mapped. Its electrical highways explored. We are in a much better position to understand human personality, disposition and behavior. Wired pretty much like a computer with on / off neuronal switches, we can pretty accurately describe the development of a personality as the development of a city of mind.

Every decision is a line. Claimed mind territory. Every habit, is the claiming of space. The conquest of a portion of the city. Putting down stakes. Building some edifice of thought, behavior or feeling, which by habituation (inhabitation) becomes uniquely the domain of who we all experience as self. So much so that if you suddenly act out of character, we all would interpret that some outside force had *possessed* /seized ownership / captured your mind suddenly and by force, overturned your laws, lines and natural limits.

We can call human personality territorialized consciousness. And as with all territory, borders and boundaries maintain the claim of the inhabitants. The habituator. The persona in the soma. This is called in the New Testament the inner man.

Being bound by restrictions sometimes seems anathema to the human spirit.

This is why it is such a state of blessing when *the lines fall to you in **pleasant** (pleasurable/ pleasing) places*. You are kept in line (pun intended) by your own satiation, not by threat (fear) of external sanctions. There is no desire to trespass. Who wants to seek out pain when the grass is greener on your side of the fence?

This is what the New Testament alluded to by the law (of love) being written in your heart rather than on cold unforgiving stone (symbol of punishment and pain imposed externally in the Old Testament.)

*Their drink offerings of blood will I **not** offer.*

Because my portion is *more than enough.* It fulfills me **utterly**. The Lord is my Shepherd. I lack **nothing**. I am fed. My thirsts are quenched. I am thoroughly satisfied.

These are important abc's of the Christ life. Why then even the apostles of Christ have historically struggled to discern and exercise their tremendous liberty in Christ and instead wound up in some very frustrating struggles with man issued boundaries and traditions, limits, a sense of sin (a missed target, unattained goal) and death (stagnation / frustrated life / spent and unrewarded desire)?

Explain Romans 6 in the light of the glorious liberty of this goodly heritage in Psalms 16.

If reading words on a page fulfilled the urge to experience life and achieve mastery, then I would continue to deliberate from here. However Wisdom tells me to smile and repeat something familiar, knowing that we will all get whatever we need to get whenever we really want to get it. Own your process. But let God be true even if He seems like a liar to you from your obscure position in the flesh.

What is your gift? Your calling? Your portion? Give it. Delight yourself in exercising your abundance to realize that it is indeed there. My cup is to fulfill the will of Him that sent me with Purpose and talents and a river of life to give. My cup is the Lord who maintains my lot.....who keeps me within my chosen and delightful boundaries. My cup is full and running over !!! Amen.

3. **Reins (Inspiration, Information and Identity)**

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Psalms 16
[7] I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my **reins** also instruct me in the night seasons.

Human consciousness is capable of only three basic things. We think. We feel. We act.
That's it. The story of the human race in six words.

Human consciousness receives, processes, generates and stores data:
passively through thoughts and feelings and
actively expresses data generated impulses through ***intent.***

To be precise, actions can be direct or indirect.

When **Intent** expresses itself *directly* through the **body**, we call that ***action;***
but intent can also express itself *indirectly* through the force of the **spirit** and **mind.**
This we call ***influence.***

So thoughts and feelings are the sum total of awareness. The images / objects in our perceptual field, the sound waves in our aural field, and the sensations of the skin and tongue - (touch / taste), along with the scents in the air (smell) make up the body of our thoughts. We reduce these sense perceptions to coded images or symbolic sounds – pictures, words and music; and this is the foundation of our entire thought process. Our imaginations, expectations, speculations, ruminations, meditations are all based on **thought**.

Feelings are more subtle than thought. In fact you could call feelings embryonic thoughts. These are relative states of ease / un-ease. Dispositional responses to stimuli.
Feelings, to reduce our psychological complexity to binary, fundamentally pain, and pleasure, (and all their many children, otherwise called **emotions)** are
states of consciousness (spirits) with :-

1. chemical cognates, because of the biological mechanisms involved in their conveyance throughout the body and the resulting sensation accompanied; i.e. the flooding the blood stream with the trigger enzymes:

- Adrenaline (fear/anxiety)
- acetyl choline (peace)
- serotonin (happiness)
- oxytocin (love)
- dopamine (pleasure)
- etc.

2. Energetic/ vibrational signatures – affecting frequency of pulse, breath, brain waves etc.

3. The ability to evolve and become mythically embodied in higher, more complex and independent thought forms/psychic beings with distinctive personality and powers fueled by human imagination working individually or collectively in space/time through focus of habit, ritual and legend.

Imagination – the power of the **psyche** (spirit), is exponentially more powerful than Intellect - the power of
the **psuche** (soul), which is exponentially more powerful than manipulation / physical work – the power of the **soma** (human body).

In Hebrew Psychology, the body's thought center is not the head but the heart.

The heart *thinks*	Proverbs 23:7,	as a man thinketh in his heart, …
	Mark 7:21	out of the heart of men, proceed thoughts,
The heart *imagines*	Genesis 6:5	'…for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'…
Genesis 8:21		"….. the imagination of man's heart….."
The heart *speaks*	Genesis 27:41	'**said** in his heart'
	Psalms 14:1	The fool hath <u>**said** in his heart</u>,

The center of feeling, of desire, emotion, pain and pleasure is not, according to this Thought System, the heart but the **reins** or kidneys (hence the word 'renal' for kidneys). Klah-Yoth in the Hebrew, -It appears 13 times in the scriptures when referring to the seat of the emotions and translated in the KJV and NIV as reins, loins, inward parts, inmost being, and mind.

From this standpoint, **sensuousness** (for most Christians, a 'bad word' associated with the 'flesh' in New Testament theology - the 'body' as opposed to the 'spirit'....) is properly the domain of the *heart.* The heart is intimately connected with the five senses. The heart (or Mind) is therefore more tuned in to the world of matter....material things. Things of the cosmos - the created reality.

The kidneys however or reins were more subtly attenuated to the internal movements of spirit. The angels or messengers of God that gave information not based on the five senses, but the internally coded purposes of the creator. Pain. Pleasure. Passion. Desire. Affection. This was the domain of Theos, not the external cosmos.

N.B.

- To be enthused (en-theosed) or inspired (in-spirited) was to have received or encountered an angel of Theos (God); to have received an energy emission / anointing directly from the kingdom of God within. This information / impartation was itself a pure feeling. Of *passion*, or if it was an angel of torment, *pain*. Both equally a message from the right

hand or left hand of God guiding the human spirit by the reins. Showing us which way to go in the fulfillment of purpose.

- A Muse (Greek conception) was a particular angel of inspiration. To be 'amused' was to be under the influence of a Muse/spirit/angel. These pleasures and more exist in abundance at the right hand (the creative side) of God....as opposed to the left hand (the destructive side).]

- Angels can also be invoked and dispelled through
- ❖ **music** (through sympathetic vibrational resonance) and through
- ❖ **language** (code-words / psychic gateways constructed and maintained by ritual performance);

so there is, or can be an established interaction between conscious human **intent** and *superconscious divine **insight/power**.

This the pious call ‘prayer’, the impious ‘divination’.

*[the most applicable Freudian term within reach.]

When David attributes the instructions and counsels of God not to ruminations on the LAW (which he delighted in as well - see Psalms1; Psalms19) but to his disciplined listening to his kidneys - his ‘reins’ at night when the thoughts of his heart were ebbing, and the internal messengers of the kingdom within were taking ascendancy, we need to understand what he means.

David was guided by passion! God communicated his counsels to David through his passions. His boundaries were indeed his pleasures.

I understand how scary that is for all of us who have inherited a deep suspicion of what we call the caprice of human 'feelings' and forever shun them in favor of the rock of reason, based on *Logic* (from Logos - the Word)

But long before Philo - the Greek philosopher who attributed Divine status to the WORD (Gk. *logos*), whose philosophy the writer of the gospel of John coopted and appropriated to the Christos; and Paul later expounded on; ancient Hebrew wisdom attributed that same divinity to Passion....the kidneys, not divorced from the LAW, but rather married to it.

Whether we appreciate the deeper implications of Hebrew psychology or not, the scriptures begin with creative **passion**, end with consummative **passion**, and at the center is the psalms - the ultimate expression of **passion** in worship. Pleasure/ abundance or overflow is much more to be associated with the God of the Bible than Restriction / rules or laws. The distorted thinking is our own.

Erase sin consciousness, (blaming others and blaming yourself - both inextricably intertwined). Both ways render a graceless, joyless, heartless religion. Rather than submerging your mind in the legalism ('Legal' and 'Law' also come from the root *Logos*) of moral codes, take *pleasure* in fulfilling the purposes written into your heart. Take instructions from your reins.

Set the Lord always before you.....you will not be moved. Pleasure God. He will pleasure you. Nb that the scripture did not say God will give you the pleasures of your reins but of your heart. It shows that the reins are God's messages to you. What you think about them begins your message to God and begins to form the basis of your intent / will. Your response to the heavenly message. This is why God honors your heart above His angels. He genuinely is interested in you. The angels are servants of man by God's command. Hence we are instructed not to worship them.

Rather than self absorption in the frustrating
No, No, No! of the law, abandon yourself in the
Yes, Yes, Yes! of God's creative purpose (Love) burning in you like fire.
God's grace produces godliness.

Self - Effort in conforming to the law produces self- righteousness, (but more often than not;- utter frustration, guilt and every form of psychosis –

- hypocrisy
- schizophrenia
- denial
- manic depression and its bipolar swings etc etc etc.

There is no heavenly reward. Ask the Pharisees.

Zoe - the river of life is enjoyed by the passionate, the entheosed. People (chasing) after God's own heart.

Selah.

4. The Seal of ownership (The conquest of territory)

Running Over Running Over. My cup is full and running over

Psalm 16:8 "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."
"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory/ tongue/ soul rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope."

This is perhaps the most poignant part of the psalm.

What is the 'therefore' there for at the beginning of vs 9? It is a conjunction joining the previous statement. 'He is at my right hand'
Why is the Lord at my right hand (i.e. in my favourite position, my place of highest honour, pleasure / favour). Because.... 'I have set the Lord ever before me.'

I am glad because God is my favorite liquor (portion in my headcup / mind).

This 'setting the Lord ever before me' is what **seals the deal**. Something has been set. A decision made. A direction established. A transaction has taken place. A habit formed. A city built. And it is done. Unmovable. Unshakeable. Unbreakable. Amen.

Consider these:-
Deuteronomy 6:6-8(NIV)
6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and **bind them on your foreheads....**

'Bind them on your foreheads' is otherwise translated 'keep them as frontlets before your eyes'. If I keep the Lord (in this case the Law / Logos – the Lord and His Law are One) **ever before me**, I promote him to my **right hand** (as they say, 'watch this!' Selah). I become unmovable. Therefore my heart is glad. And my tongue / glory / innermost part / spirit / soul rejoices. [different translations] My body rests confidently (as opposed to labours anxiously).

Which tongue is this in verse 9? It's **not** the tongue of my heart. The heart thinks and speaks, yes. But this is not the part of me being referred to here. Recall vs 1. O my soul. **Thou** hast said unto the Lord. David called his soul 'Thou'. The conscious mind (the heart) the thinking part in Hebrew psychology, and the ***subconscious*** mind (the reins / soul /innermost part / innards / glory. the feeling / intuitional part) are two different creatures (symbiotically fused along with a body into one person). These often completely disagree with each other.

Unless this is understood, we wont understand this Psalm or ourselves and not much about successful living (Christian life). **OUR SOUL HAS A TONGUE OF ITS OWN!**

It **says** something. It *speaks to God*, not *to us*. So most of the time, we are not even **aware** of what it is saying. The key to this Psalm is what David's soul said to God in the beginning. YOU ARE **MY** LORD.

This was the Seal of Possession / Ownership/conquest of territory. Note the following verses

(Exodus. 28:36); "**Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: HOLY UNTO THE LORD.** [37] Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. [38] It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. **It will be on Aaron's forehead continually** so that they will be acceptable to the LORD.

Ezekiel 9:4-6 (NIV)
[4] "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and **put a mark on the foreheads o**f those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it."

[5] As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion.[6] Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary."

This seal of ownership concept / precept is picked up in Revelations. Four times it is mentioned where God seals his saints (his property) in the forehead. Only once is this pattern imitated by the BEAST in Rev 13. Everyone knows about the mark of the beast. But the emphasis in Revelations is **the Mark of the Lord!**
It's also a mark in the forehead and RIGHT HAND. (Hmmm)

Storytime: Michelle had prayed for Nneka's hip pain, so as we were travelling back to Kingston from Maria's house, I was telling Nneka, unaccustomed to Pentecostals, my story. I was 11 years old when I discovered that miracles were not relegated to the pages of the bible, and to me that was an astounding revelation. One that excited me to the core. People still walked on water today! The rotting dead were still raised back to life today! The blind, deaf, dumb, and all sicknesses, every human predicament still obeyed the voice of the Son / Daughter of God! 'Good News' is an understatement!

That was not the world I grew up in though. I went to school, church, watched TV and listened to the radio every morning. I went to doctors and dentists. None of the institutions of society that nurtured my soul had room for that knowledge. It was a book that happened to fall into my hands – 2 books. Mel Tari's – "Like a Mighty Rushing Wind" and "Gentle Breeze of Jesus". First hand accounts of the Indonesian revival in the seventies that completely blew the lid off my world view shaped by Allan Magnus in the mornings, various grade teachers at Vaz Prep who introduced me to the sciences, and literature, including the bible; sadly church too etc.

Every miracle in the book of Acts was duplicated in the Indonesian revival! Mel's stories 'quickened my spirit' (awoke a creative energy within me that was not there before). That was the first step. The next step however took several months. I had asthma from infancy. Myself and

another boy in my class named Allan. Every PE session, when it rained, we had to watch everybody else frolic in the drizzle while we had to take shelter in the classroom lest we wind up with an asthmatic attack, barely able to breathe. Our physical condition caused us to bond.

Well, once I understood that God still works miracles today, I set out to experience this for myself. After all, the doctors had no cure for my asthma, and the medicine was only partially effective. Why not allow God to heal me just like in those stories now awakening faith in me?

For months I listened to tape after tape, read book after book, memorized scripture after scripture seeking to erase all those years of Allan Magnus in the morning, contrary preaching from the pulpit, contrary teaching from the blackboard, lieterature (the 'e' is deliberate) from the doctor; prescriptions, descriptions and prognoses, medical and so called 'scientific' information; and replace them with "by His stripes you were healed" I devoured new books – Kenny Hagin, RW Schambach, Smith Wigglesworth, Hobart Freeman, Bruce Kinsey (anybody experiencing an alternate reality) etc etc etc. Till finally, I '**knew**'.

When I released my faith for healing at a prayer meeting, I explained to Nneka, I wasn't asking somebody to pray ***for*** me in order to get healed. I knew I was healed and decided to release that faith when I was prayed for. It didn't matter to me **who** prayed. It could have been a parrot. I *believed*.

(That word is inadequate to describe inner knowing. For too many of us, belief is really uncertainty. - *I don't know, so I believe.* Biblical faith is *certainty beyond doubt*. '*I believe',* biblically means 'I know beyond the shadow of a doubt'. This knowing is actually stronger than sense knowledge. This knowing usurps and capsizes the knowledge of the senses. This is not the (matter bound) heart thinking or speaking.

This is the reins sending a message back to the Father. This is the soul commanding the angels of God and sending them back up Jacob's ladder with a message for the Man Upstairs. 'Mi seh mi naa leggo! Yu nu seeit?'. This is when we rein in the Everlasting God by our word. "Concerning the works of my hand COMMAND YE ME" Isaiah 45:11. Reign through the reins. Turn God Almighty causing Him to repent if needs be when he is confronted with his own germinated, fruit bearing Word spoken by His Image - the EXACT REPRESENTATION OF HIS BEING.

I had made this healing Lord (described in the bible and in all of those books, tapes, and videos) **MINE**. My soul had said unto the Lord, YOU ARE **MY** LORD. (Possession goes both ways. The Lord now becomes holy unto me. I had hallowed his NAME in **my heart** by keeping his truth always before me. Faith is the marriage / merger of Bride and Bridegroom John 17.21 Rev 21:2 Both get to say "You are **mine**!" Song of Solomon 6:3)

Faith is precious. I instantly received healing and could finally do things like dance in the rain, dive naked into an ice cold river at 5:30 in the morning and drip dry slowly afterwards, sniff flowers and dusty carpets....things that would have given me pneumonia and put me at death's door before; nebulized and hospitalized for days. Now I was FREE!!

That same week, Allan died of an asthma attack and suffocated in the night. Looking at his casket at that funeral, I understood how precious a gift this new found faith of mine was.

Our soul, being eternal, exists in the NOW. Faith can be found..... and lost (to get technically accurate – rather than 'lost' let's just say dormant and forgotten. Nuance can be important.)

That's why it is continually tried, in order to be perfected / stabilized. Years later, when I saw a potentially cancerous growth on my hand, I became depressed. Doctor's advice was laser surgery. Didn't have the money. (How did I get to that place?) Soul had no exercise. No trial. Complacency set in. My heart sank.

I went to the river. My heart was gladdened by the river and for a moment, I was granted access to my soul channel. The word of knowledge came through. An angel. The message – bind a clove of garlic on the growth. It was actually a dramatic encounter. One of those times when inward thought coincides with outward sign. Call it serendipity, synchronicity, angels, 'buck up' or whatever. That garlic instruction came straight from heaven through my reins.

Result? Growth completely dissolved in three days. Cost less than $10. Courtesy of heaven. Someone else with the same condition opted for the more than $100,000 laser surgery solution. She bled to death due to some procedural error. This faith is precious indeed! The difference between life and death.

The first exercise assigned for my fledgling healing faith was not understood by me at the time. I twisted my ankle. The pain was excruciating. So I released my faith. I spoke the word of faith and Allakazam! The pain was still there.

I was puzzled. God has a sense of humor. I had twisted the ankle on the way to a prayer meeting. I arrived late and nobody noticed me limp in. Someone got a word of knowledge about my condition. I was elated. I claimed the healing. The pain persisted....for about 14 days! I was completely baffled! I reasoned it would have taken 14 days to heal up naturally anyhow. Why didn't my faith *work*?

The Spirit then showed me how much I had been exercising my faith for 14 days. Regardless of the symptoms, I was speaking my truth. Declaring health in the midst of pain. Calling something that was not as if it were. After those 14 days an unexpected result showed in my faith level when I casually passed someone with a headache, I sensed it immediately and became incensed. How dare disease even come into my presence! I placed my holy right hand on that compromised forehead. "**OUT!!"** Instant manifestation. I became a walking healing machine.

The gift of faith had been watered. The muscle of faith had been tried and exercised. I had taken spiritual territory. The lines had indeed fallen to me in pleasant places. The Lord at my right hand had established me.

Being **established** needs to be seen in the light of the conquest of new mind territory or spiritual growth. – The expansion of one's domain, which always imply the conflict of kingdoms, and a contest for power because all territory is subject to some claim of ownership. In order to possess territory, the claim of the previous occupants have to be neutralized (whether through warfare or appeasement).

Psalms 125:1 *Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.*

Matthew18:19 …..*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The context of the above verses is warfare. The last man standing Wins. Rests. And Rejoices in victory. So in the spirit of perseverance, patience, hope, faith and love we stand till like David our heart is glad. Our Glory rejoices and our bodies rested in confidence. Amen.

5. The Promise of Presence

Running over running over my cup is full and running over

Psalms 16
[10] For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
[11] Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

I like David am a psalmist. I know how important place is to inspiration. Certain places carry different vibrations. I talk a lot about the river because in over 30 years of seeking out river solaces, I have never seen anyone leave the river with a heavy heart. They come sweaty and sad. They go fresh and singing. Water is more than a metaphor for life. It is substantially so.

Everyone understands the calmative effect of running water. All artists know the inspiring quality of river and rain. When I experience a commanding work of art / music / drama, I often wonder instinctively where the writer was when that work was born. Your place influences your perspective.

Where was David when he wrote this psalm of psalms. This theology of pleasure, Psalms 16. I am almost positive of the answer. *He was in hell.*

Nothing else fits the facts. Why would he start out "Preserve me O God" singing from verdant pastures and cool waters? David was in hell (and not for the first time.....for passionate people, apparently a favourite place; ..... rest assured…… for good or bad…. your passions ***will*** get you into trouble).

He had been there before. He had learned even there to experience the sweet **presence of God**, the source of his greatest strength, the sense of his sweetest pleasure, the surety of his safe passage as he navigated God's purpose in his life.

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.

Psalms 84:6 Who passing through the valley of Baca (tears) make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.
and so he understood hell as a passageway, not a place of permanence. He would never be abandoned there....although that is exactly what the sign on the gates of hell say. *Abandonment*.

The name of the gatekeeper? *Abaddon*.(cute) If you have ever faced a gunman eye to eye while he was about to squeeze the trigger of a gun pointed at your head, you will catch a glimpse of him. No pun intended, very *grave* fellow indeed. Every murderer has his eye. When you can look into the face of death with a smile, you are experiencing the power of a Higher Presence.

Even Jesus, when entering the gates cried out at first "Why hast thou forsaken me?" You cant enter hell without having that thought. Just call it the atmosphere of the place. (none)

But this is the hope of every believer, a weapon against the grimmest of circumstances. '**Thou will not...**'Wow. That speaks volumes. There are the boundary lines again. 'Not'. That's a boundary. A commandment, **Thou shall not** abandon.....And the faithful have understood that God is ***bound*** by His own word to be with us always. Hence the power of resurrection even in the grave. Even in the salt of tears fresh rain fills up pools which overflow into a river.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. Hallelujah!
So hell yields to our advances. (Amen). Its gates cannot prevail. (Amen) We plunder as did David her armies. (Amen). We set her prisoners free. (Amen) We sew up the pit with the sword of our mouths, plow it up, seed it up, and convert it into a place where the river of God flows. (Amen).

Hell has no permanence. That, excuse me, is a damned lie. The everlasting FIRE is none but Jehovah our God, the LIVING WATER to all who will believe.

Look up. Expect Him to show up his true intentions. Believe and you will see his salvation. His presence is all that there is. There really is no other. And at his right hand there is ***always*** fullness of JOY. Amen.

Brawta (the overflow): Fullness of Joy

What is the opposite of Joy? Often we need to identify something by its opposite. Grief is not a good answer. Because we have come to associate grief with an event. The death of a loved one. Some loss of a treasured person, property or status. We don't recognize clearly that the grieving process can be sustained subconsciously long after any particular event and the entire environment of our spirits become a dull grey.

We also don't realize that joy and therefore grief can exist in pockets of our being. So in some areas, we are ebullient and functional, but in other areas we limp in the night of a constant state of grief, no longer consciously connected with any distinct traumatic memory. Consequently our emotions go up and down, widely swinging from pole to pole based on this trigger or that. One moment segues into laughter then sorrow, happiness then hopelessness, resolute determination then abject despair.

Rather than grief, I would say the opposite of Joy is need....or better put - neediness. A picture of the joyful soul? A cup, full and running over. A picture of neediness? Something is missing / lost. An empty cup.

The science of 'rejoicing in the Lord always', in the best of times and in the worst of times, is what the cumulative wisdom of this book should illuminate. Much of the wealth of wisdom however will have to be dug out from the pages and mined from the apparent jumble of abstraction represented by the layers of thought presented in each chapter. The effort has been more than worth it for me personally, who considers myself the primary recipient of the wisdom, not its creator.

I have heard that God gives gifts to people who need them most. If that's true I see how I qualified for the authorship of this work. My life has been filled with particularly steep peaks and pretty low valleys. Constancy has been my greatest life challenge.

I can personally vouch for the transforming truths contained herein and wish to offer three principles that allow direct access to much of the hidden wisdom awaiting diligent excavation. A kind of condensation and simplification of the material produced by constant meditation on its truths. A three-fold key unlocking the depths of treasure encoded in the insights. To use an allegorical **Tale of two Cities** for the exposition we begin with:-

1. Detach / Cease / Rest - Neediness is more than an empty cup. Nature abhors a vacuum. The emptiness attracts a cocktail of toxicity that can become quite compelling in its gravity. And I do mean gravity. A magnetic field that attracts what the bible describes in Rev 18 " Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird"

The toxic devils, foul spirits, and hateful birds include self pity, self absorption, self hatred, self deprecation, depression (self resignation); and once the floor of self love has caved in, the

bottomless pit of demons from hell swirl to ever increasing depths of misery, bitterness, torment. Jealousy, spite, Murder .etc. etc. it just goes on and on really with no end in sight.

These burdens cannot be borne. These issues cannot be sorted out, no matter which way you turn. Shut out the noise of her way-less streets. Literally, just take a break. Disconnect completely from ***the disappointed city***. It is fallen. Fallen. Nothing can put Humpty Dumpty together again. The foundations of that city were all wrong to begin with. Get out of her. Come away. Detach. Rest.

2. Find the stillness.

Psalms 46:1 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

Revelation 22
22 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
[2] In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
[3] And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
[4] And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

Psalms 23. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want (nothing is missing, wanting, lacking) .....he restores my soul by still waters.

Isaiah 30:15..... In ***returning and rest*** shall ye be saved; in ***quietness and in confidence*** shall be your strength.....

The ***joyful city*** has foundations not of this world. This joy that's unspeakable and full of glory cannot be derived from or taken away by anything in the world. The illusion that our joy depends on anything or anyone else besides those live giving waters flowing from the belly of a satisfied customer with Jesus' service is an illusion. Come unto Me (Jesus) and we'll find rest for our weary souls and water to fill our cups to overflowing. The Spirit and the Bride are always inviting us to come away. Stop trying to serve Jesus. Let him serve you some life giving water.

3. Change the focus - God's joy is found in stillness and maintained in service. Rather than being sucked in by the gravitational pull of I NEED. Maintain the abundant vision of I HAVE by giving. You cant give unless you have. The more we focus on serving the needs of others is the more we banish the illusion that I NEED. and tap into the unlimited reservoir of what we do indeed have at our center - not a bottomless pit, but an eternal river. Amen