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Pastor David Miklas
Message #1 Seven Words of Christ at Calvary

God's Word is written for our instruction. As one must dive deep for pearls and dig deep for precious stones, so must we dive deep into God's Word if we are going to uncover its powerful principles. Here are some Christian Life Principles from Proverbs.

FIRST: <u>LET NOT</u>. In Proverbs 3:3, 21 we read, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. (21) My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion." Mercy, truth, sound wisdom and discretion are to be grasped. In order to take hold of them, we must turn loose of pride, error, simplemindedness and human folly.

In Proverbs 7:25 we read, "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths." One must guard their heart from being lured down a path that appears exciting but ends in evil. In Proverbs 19:18 we read, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Parents must instill accountability into their children while they still have the most influence upon them. Tears of repentance now are easier to bear than their tears of remorse later. In Proverbs 24:17 we read, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." We should never rejoice at the failings of others. Rather, we should take the high road and honor those who dishonor us as illustrated in II Samuel 1:17-27.

SECOND: <u>LEAN NOT</u>. In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Trust God in all things and never demand an explanation for what He is doing.

THIRD: <u>LUST NOT</u>. In Proverbs 6:25 we read, "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids." Lust causes one to lay aside reason at the expense of reality. When one gives over to lust, he sins against his own mind, emotions and body (I Corinthians 6:13-20; I Thessalonians 4:17). Guard the minds of your children. All forms of immorality have their beginning in the seeds of sensuality sown in the mind (Romans 1:18-32).

FOURTH: <u>LOVE NOT</u>. In Proverbs 20:13 we read, "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shall be satisfied with bread." All of nature tends to disorder. This is the second law of thermo-dynamics. Discipline and order must be learned. The disciplined life is the productive life.

FIFTH: <u>LABOR NOT</u>. In Proverbs 23:4-5 we read, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." Earthly riches are temporal and fleeting. Live not only for time, but for eternity. "One short life will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." Labor in the realm of faith. Your rewards, though unseen here, will shine there.

SIXTH: LOOK NOT. In Proverbs 23:31-32 we read, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,

when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Alcohol is the number one drug in America. There are more deaths attributed to alcohol than experienced in all our nation's wars combined. Make a holy vow before God that alcohol will never touch your lips, and stick to it.

Here is a question to consider. How much should I give each Sunday?

In the Old Testament we read in Malachi 3:6-11, "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (7) Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? (8) Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. (9) Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. (10) Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (11) And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."

When it comes to the offering in the church there are those who ask "How much should I give each Sunday? Others will not give anything just letting the plate pass on by. Still others will just tip God with a dollar or two. Then there are others who understand God's instructions to give regularly of their tithes and offering. So then what is the amount? It should be:

SACRIFICAL, "...poor widow...cast all that she had" — Mark 12:41-44

<u>PERSONALLY DETERMINED</u> "beyond their power they were willing of themselves;" — II Corinthians 8:3

<u>DETERMINED BY LOVE</u> "...parted them to all men, as every man had need." – Romans 15:25-27

<u>DETERMINED BY YOUR VIEW OF GOD</u> "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you..." – Luke 6:38; Philippians 4:19; II Corinthians 9:8

<u>DETERMINED WITH A VIEW TOWARD ETERNITY</u> "...lay up for yourself treasure in heaven..." Matthew 6:19-20; II Corinthians 6:9

<u>DETERMINED BY WHAT YOU GAINED LAST WEEK</u> "...as God has prospered you..." Corinthians 16:1-9

In the New Testament I Corinthians 16:1-2 we read, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. (2) Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

In His Amazing Grace -

Pastor David Miklas

PS: Something to Ponder: Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through? God Specializes in things thought impossible; He does the things no one else can do. Got any problems you think are unsolvable? Got any burdens too heavy to bear? God has the power to do the impossible; If you will call, He will hear your prayer.

"Father, Forgive Them"

Everything about the crucifixion of Christ is of surpassing interest. It is almost impossible to visit the excruciatingly painful scene at Calvary and be able to move past it all in one sitting.

It was at CALVARY where God did His best and man did his worst.

It was at CALVARY where faith is justified, hope is assured, and love conquered all.

It was at CALVARY where the Savior's heart of grace was contrasted with man's heart of rebellion.

No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Christ and Him crucified." The hymn writers reflected upon Calvary when they wrote,

"In the cross of Christ I Glory, towering over the wrecks of time. All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime."

> "When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but lost, And pour contempt on all my pride.

"Marvelous grace of our Loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, Yonder on Calvary's mount out-poured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt."

I suppose a man could preach his entire life and never exhaust the riches that surround Calvary. Let's linger at the foot of His cross and watch and listen. If we pay close attention, we'll hear not one or two utterances fall from His lips, but <u>SEVEN</u> all-important statements. Timeless truths are contained in them that we don't want to miss.

These <u>SEVEN</u> sayings become a marvelous demonstration of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They help us in a very real sense to understand the purpose and heart of the crucifixion. Here is a summary of the <u>Seven Words of Christ at Calvary</u>.

FIRST are the words of FORGIVENESS, found in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

SECOND are the words of **SALVATION**, found in Luke 23:43: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

THIRD are the words of **AFFECTION**, found in John 19:26-27: **"Woman behold thy Son!...Behold thy Mother!"**

FOURTH are the words of ANGUISH, found in Matthew 27:46: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

FIFTH are the words of SUFFERING, found in John 19:28: "I thirst."

SIXTH are the words of VICTORY, found in John 19:30: "It is finished..."

SEVENTH are the words of **CONTENTMENT**, found in Luke 23:46: "Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit."

Christ hung on the cross for 6 agonizing hours before He died. He was there from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon. From 9:00 until noon, it was daylight. At noon, a strange and eerie darkness blanketed the skies, and that darkness lasted until after 3:00 in the afternoon. This timing is significant, because Christ's **SEVEN** last statements fall into two groups:

The first **three** were said during the daylight period; the last **four** were uttered after the darkness came over the land.

The first **three** sayings had to do with other people; the last **four** had to do with Jesus Himself.

The first **three** had to do with His horizontal relationships with others; the last **four** had to do with His vertical relationship with God.

The first **three** had to do with His compassion for others; the last **four** had to do with His suffering and the meaning of His death.

While other victims cursed and screamed words of bitterness, Jesus focused His mind first on others, then on the Father. Even more amazing, after all He had been through; His first words were gracious terms of forgiveness!

The first utterance from the cross, the words of <u>FORGIVENESS</u> are found in the context of Luke 23:32-37.

"And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. (33) And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. (34) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. (35) And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (36) And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, (37) And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. (38) And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

As we pause and consider the statement of this message found in verse 34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" several significant observations come to mind.

<u>First</u>: Jesus' prayer "Father, forgive them" is in fulfillment of the prophetic word predicted seven hundred years before Christ came to earth in Isaiah 53:12,

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was <u>numbered with the transgressors</u>, and he bare the sin of many, and made <u>intercession for the transgressors</u>."

Christ hung there on the cross **DESPISED** and **REJECTED**, a MAN OF SORROWS, ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF, WOUNDED, BRUISED and BEATEN, POURING OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH, and yet:

He looked at His murderers and said, "Father, forgive them."

He looked at those crucifying Him and said, "Father, forgive them."

He looked at the transgressors at the cross and said, "Father, forgive them."

He looked down the corridor of time and saw you and your sins and He saw me and my sins, and said, "Father, forgive them."

Knowing that all scripture must be fulfilled, Jesus, from the cross, made intercession for the transgressors by saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

<u>Second</u>: Our Lord's first saying on the cross "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." finds Him in an attitude of prayer. How significant! How instructive!

The **FIRST** utterance from the cross was a prayer, "**Father**, **forgive them**; **for they know not what they do.**"

The MIDDLE utterance from the cross was a prayer, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The LAST utterance from the cross was also a prayer, "Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit."

Jesus began his ministry in prayer; when He was baptized. The Bible says in Luke 3:21, "Jesus also being baptized, and praying..." Now He closes His earthly ministry in prayer. While dying on a cross, He prays, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Jesus never lost His sense of divine mission. He did not pray, "Father, forgive ME;" He prayed "Father, forgive THEM." He knew the reason He was on the cross. Jesus was dying to pay the debt of sinners.

<u>Third</u>: Jesus offers this prayer of intercession, "Father, forgive them" more than once. The word "FORGIVE" is in the Greek imperfect tense indicating continuous action in the past. In other words Jesus was praying this prayer over and over again, "Father, forgive them." "Father, forgive them."

<u>When</u> they took the crossbeam and laid it on His shoulders, compelling Him to carry it, He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

<u>When</u> they drove the nails through His hands and through His feet into the cross, He was praying, "Father, forgive them."

<u>When</u> they took His clothing from Him, and shamed Him before His followers, He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

<u>When</u> Jesus looked down from the cross, and saw the crowd for whom He was dying gathered round Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

In Matthew 27:36, the Bible tells us after "the soldiers had parted his garments and cast lots for His robe; they sat down to watch Him." Why did they sit down to watch Him? I suggest the possibility when Jesus uttered His prayer of "Father, forgive them," for the 5th or 6th time or more, His words caught the attention of the soldiers. Their ears had grown accustomed to the bitter curses of the victims, but never had they heard words like this, "Father, forgive them." coming from one dying on a cross. Perhaps this was what caught the attention of the Roman centurion who later acknowledged, "Truly this was the Son of God."

At the cross, these soldiers discovered in "Father, forgive them" the Anthem of Heaven proclaimed, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..."

At the cross, these soldiers found God's intertwining of LOVE and JUSTICE. For in Romans 5:8 we read, "But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us "

One day, a young boy was asked to define forgiveness. He replied, "It is the perfume that flowers breathe when trampled upon." Marvelous grace, infinite grace as forgiveness, now freely bestowed upon all who believe!

Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

As we continue to meditate upon the text, let me point out to you **five** significant lessons to be learned from Christ as He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

<u>First</u>: Jesus addressed his prayer to God the Father when He said "FATHER forgive them." The next time He addresses His Father from the cross, He will cry out, "My God, My God" as He bears the full weight of the sin of the world.

Remember up to this point, Jesus has never asked the Father to forgive anyone. As long as the Son of God was on earth, He had the authority to forgive sins. But now He has been raised from the earth completing the work of redemption, humbling Himself under the authority of God the Father.

<u>Second</u>: Jesus, in His prayer, makes a request, "Father, FORGIVE them." That is an amazing request, isn't it?

If someone pressed a crown of sharp thorns on your head,

If someone stripped you naked for the world to see,

If someone brutally punched you numerous times in the face,

If someone drove nails into your hands and into your feet and lifted you up on a cross to die,

Be honest, would you pray that kind of prayer for them? Today, at the slightest offense, we are ready to retaliate, defend ourselves, and fight back. Yet in His greatest moment of agony, Jesus sincerely prays, "Father, FORGIVE them."

I have read that the word forgiveness means, among other definitions, "to bear the burden." For instance, if a man owed you a thousand dollars, and you forgave him his debt; you would bear the burden for those thousand dollars.

Likewise if Jesus was to forgive you of all your sins against God, then it would be <u>He who would have to bear the burden of those sins</u>. Every sin we have ever committed, Jesus bore in His own body on the cross. I Peter 2:24 tells us that, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being, dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." And, thank God, He did! The hymn writer wrote,

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

Could I forgive as Christ has forgiven? Yes, a transformed child of God, a man or woman whose life has been changed by the power of God could pray such a prayer. In fact, saints down through the ages have done so, beginning with Stephen, the first martyr in the history of the church. With rocks and stones pelting his body, Stephen graciously prayed in Acts 7:60, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In other words, "Father, FORGIVE them." Somewhere in the years past I read,

Anyone can love the lovely.

Anyone can forgive the forgivable.

But Christians are unique.

We are called to love the unlovely,

To forgive the unforgivable.

The way God has forgiven us through Christ is the same way we are to forgive others. All because of Calvary we can forgive. Remember Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Few acts have a greater impact on those who mistreat us and abuse us than our telling them we "forgive" them!

<u>Third</u>: Jesus in His prayer addresses the object, "Father, forgive THEM." Who is included as "THEM"? Who are "THEY"? In general terms, Jesus' request for forgiveness refers to His immediate world.

It includes every Jew who initiated the trials and planned and carried out His crucifixion.

It includes every Gentile who had even the smallest part in His death.

But beyond that immediate world, when Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them," He included **ALL** of humanity - past, present and future; including you and I since the Bible in Hebrews 2:9 teaches that, "Jesus tasted death for all men."

Jesus prayed for me that day as much as if He had called my name and said,

"Father, forgive David Miklas. He has a part in my crucifixion.

He too put the nails in my hands and feet.

He too placed the crown of thorns upon my head.

He too sat there and scoffed while I died. He is a Hell-deserving sinner even though he knows it not; "Father, forgive him."

When the Lord Jesus asked the Father to forgive, He had all of us in mind! In Colossians 2:13-14, the Holy Spirit, speaking through the pen of the Apostle Paul, confirms He did just that.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; (14) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;..."

He forgave all our transgressions. He canceled our certificate of debt and its hostile decrees against us.

When a criminal was put to death on a cross, the soldiers scrawled out the identity of his crime on a sign that was nailed to the cross, above the victim's head. That is why Jesus had the sign nailed over his head, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Paul says the Lord Jesus took our guilt and nailed it to His cross. He took our sins, yours and mine, and carried them with Him as He was nailed to the cross. He died for every sin that you and I have ever committed in the past and will ever commit from this day forward. Our Saviour did not utter hollow words or an empty prayer to a silent God. The Son of God said, "Father, forgive them" and the Father replied, "I forgive them." Talk about God's grace!

In Ephesians 1:7 we read, "In whom (that is Christ Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;..."

Since Christ bore our sin on the cross, we have been fully forgiven. That means we have been empowered to live differently than we did before. How then ought we to act toward others who have sinned against us?

In Colossians 3:12-14 we read, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

<u>Fourth</u>: This prayer Jesus prayed contains the reason for His forgiveness. "Father, forgive them, for they know not WHAT they do." This does not mean that the enemies of Christ were ignorant of the FACT of His crucifixion.

They knew full well that they had cried, "Crucify Him!"

They knew full well their vile request had been granted them.

They knew full well that He had been nailed to the tree for they were eye-witnesses of the crime.

What then did our Lord mean when He said, "...for they know not WHAT they do?"

They did not know it was for their sins Jesus was on the cross.

They did not know that this was the Lord of Glory.

They **ought** to have known. They should have known. Their **BLINDNESS** was inexcusable.

Had not the Old Testament prophesies given sufficient evidence to identify Christ?

Had not the sacrificial system been sufficient to identify Christ?

Had not the unique teaching of the Son of God been sufficient? Even they admitted of Him, "**Never man spoke like this man.**"

How sad to think even today this terrible **BLINDNESS** is still being repeated over and over again by those who still are without Christ as their Saviour.

Little do they know, they are still REJECTING God's great Salvation. **Little do** they know how awful the sin of slighting the Son of God. **Little do** they know the crime of saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

The question still comes down to, "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" If today you are still blind to God's saving grace, may the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." lift that blindness from your soul so that you may see the "Marvelous, infinite, marvelous grace, freely bestowed on all who believe..."

<u>Fifth</u>: Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them." was a prayer for **POSTPONEMENT**. Interestingly,

The word "forgive" is the same Greek word translated "suffer" in Matthew 19:14 when Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me."

The word "forgive" is the same Greek word translated "let be" in Matthew 27:49, when the soldier said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him." Here the word means "Wait, hold back."

Now when the Lord was using the word "forgive" He was saying, "postpone the judgment. Hold back the wrath, WAIT! They don't know what they are doing." And thank God He is still willing to hold back the judgment because He wants people to be saved.

In II Peter 3:9 we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But postponement does not mean escape; and unless one turns to Jesus, someday he will die and go to hell without hope of and without the Saviour.

Listen to this story taken from an incident in the war between Russia and Finland. Seven soldiers were held prisoners in the town hall in Finland. They were to be shot at sunrise. They were communists and ungodly men; they had hope for neither time nor eternity. But one of them began to sing,

Safe in the Arms of Jesus, Safe on His gentle breast, There by His love o'ershadowed, Sweetly my soul shall rest.

When the verse was finished, one of his follow prisoners spoke out, "Where did you get that, you fool? Are you trying to make us religious?"

Koshinen, the singing soldier, replied, "Comrades, listen to me. When I first heard that song I laughed, too. But that song got a hold of me. It is now cowardly for me to hide my faith. The God my mother believed in has now become my God also. Last night I prayed like the thief on the cross that Christ would FORGIVE me and cleanse my sin and make me ready for Heaven. I have accepted the crucified Saviour and I thank Him. I have kept it to myself as long as I could, but within a few hours we will face the firing squad and I will be with the Lord, saved by grace."

The silence that followed was broken as one man after the other came to Koshinen and said "You are right, if I only knew there was mercy for me, too. These hands have shed blood, and I have cursed God and trampled on all that is holy. Now I realize that there is a Hell and that is the proper place for me. Tomorrow I shall die, and my soul shall be in the hands of the Devil." By 4:00 in the morning all of the red communists were saved, and by 6:00 in the morning they were marched before the firing squad. As they lined up with their hands raised Heavenward, they began to sing,

Safe in the Arms of Jesus, Safe on His gentle breast, There by His love o'ershadowed,

Sweetly my soul shall rest.

As each was shot, they went into eternity saved by grace. God had postponed His wrath and held back His judgment until those red soldiers knew what they were doing. "Father, postpone the judgment. Father hold back the wrath. They don't know what they are doing."

All over this area, in every community around here as well as around the world, there are people for whom God is holding back the judgment of eternal damnation. God is postponing His wrath against people to whom we are to go and share why Christ on the cross of Calvary, cried "Father, forgive them."

Here is the word of the cross that we must, first of all, take into our hearts.

Here is the word of the cross that we are to share with others before the door of opportunity closes upon them. Before they are lost, doomed into eternity without the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for them He cried, **"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO."**

Here is the word of the cross that we are to express to others when they sin against us. This is powerfully spelled out for us in Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Then in a related passage in Ephesians 4:31-32 we read, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Remember, because of Calvary it is characteristic of believers to forgive others who sin against us.

If God has spoken to your heart after reading sermon #1 on the **Seven Words of Christ at Calvary**, **"Father, Forgive Them"** then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."
Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: "I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation."

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior let me know. Please send an e-mail to, pdmikBBM@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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