

# **Bible Studies Recapitulated**

**Volume Three: Living Close to God**

**by Dick Gibbs**

# ***Bible Studies Recapitulated: Living Close to God***

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# *Bible Studies Recapitulated: Living Close to God*

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# Part Six

# Walking in the Spirit

## *In This Part...*

Chapter 23: *Roles of the Holy Spirit*

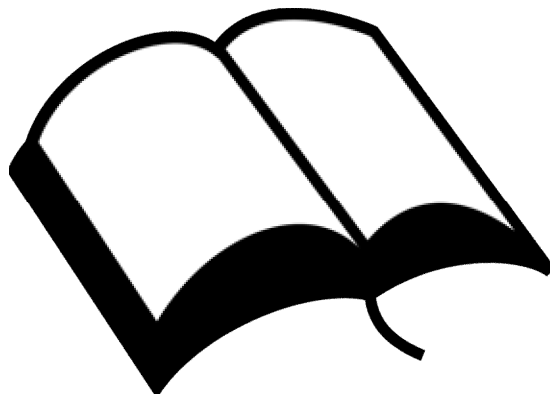
Chapter 24: *Internal Make-up of Man*

Chapter 25: *Ages: Law vs. Spirit*

Chapter 26: *God's Standards*

Chapter 27: *Walking by the Spirit*

Chapter 28: *Things Done in the Spirit*



**Gal. 5:16**—*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

## Chapter 23

# Roles of the Holy Spirit

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. The Deity of the Holy Spirit*
- B. The Holy Spirit is Given*
- C. Specific Roles of the Holy Spirit*

### *A. The Deity of the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, and is God Himself. This is hard to comprehend in our finite minds. We hardly grasp the scope of the universe, let alone the size and grandeur of God, so we cannot explain the Trinity, or the full extent and nature of God. But we do know that God consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We know that each member of the Godhead is one in essence with the others, but different in function.

1 John 5:7 says, “For there are three bearing witness in heaven: the Father, the Word [which is Jesus Christ, as per John 1:1-2, 14], and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” The Three...are *One*. The observation we want to make is that the Holy Spirit is One of the Three, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is *Deity*, or God in essence. We see the deity of the Holy Spirit in a number of places in Scripture, as in 1 Cor. 3:16, which says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” Matt. 28:19 says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

And there are other passages showing the Deity of the Holy Spirit, such as Phil. 1:19, which refers to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Christ”, saying, “...for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.”

In Ps. 139:7-10, the Holy Spirit is said to be “everywhere”, as follows:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

The Holy Spirit also knows God’s thoughts, the way our own spirits know *our* thoughts. The same way that our spirits *are* us, the Spirit of God *is* God. 1 Cor. 2:10-11 says this specifically: “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

The Holy Spirit also helped design the Ages and Covenants that specify parameters for God’s dealings at particular times with particular people in particular ways, as we see in Heb. 10:15-17:

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

Only God can do these things...so, since the Holy Spirit does them, He must be God.

In Is. 6, Isaiah describes how he has seen the “King, the Lord Almighty” (verse 5), and has received a message from Him to give to the people. When Paul quotes part of this passage from Isaiah in Acts 28:25-26, he translates the “King, the Lord Almighty” as the “Holy Spirit”, which shows there is no difference between them. A similar connection is seen in Jer. 31:31-34, which is quoted in Heb. 10:15-17, where “Lord”, as it was given in Jeremiah, is translated “Holy Spirit” in Hebrews.

The Holy Spirit is God.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Who are the three members of the Trinity?

**Question 2.** In the same way that our spirits are essentially *us*, the Holy Spirit is essentially \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Cor. 2:10**—...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

**1 Cor. 2:14a**—The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God....

## ***Remember***

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all fully God. They all have the same majesty and glory in their divinely-coordinated functions. In each of the three Persons of the Godhead, we have the undiminished completeness of God.

## ***B. The Holy Spirit is Given***

The Holy Spirit was promised and anticipated by some during the Age of the Law, even though—during that Age—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was sporadic and linked to specific purposes. Today, He permanently indwells every believer. Luke 11:13 shows that, while Jesus was ministering on the earth, prior to His Ascension and the Day of Pentecost (when the time for the indwelling of every believer began), the Holy Spirit could be “asked for”. Now it is automatic...at salvation.

In Ez. 37:14a, God promised to put the Holy Spirit in us, saying, “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live....” Is. 44:3 predicted this also, saying, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Joel 2:28-29 confirms this promise, as follows:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Ez. 36A:24-27 adds this:

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

These passages anticipate not only the coming of the Holy Spirit, but His role in cleansing us from sin at salvation...and when we confess...and suggests His motivation and empowerment to enable us to follow His Word.

Jesus also anticipated the coming of the Holy Spirit, saying the following in John 7:37-39:

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The coming of the Holy Spirit brought to true God-worshippers a new opportunity of grace...to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit...now applying to all believers, all the time. Our primary relationship with God now is through the indwelling Spirit. Sometimes He is called God inside of us, sometimes



Christ, but He is always God. During this Age, He is referred to mostly as the Holy Spirit, Who has a unique mission to teach and assist believers during this special time in which we live. Our task in this Age is to discover how to stay in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, so that He can direct us.

To simplify our understanding of the events that occurred around the time the Holy Spirit was given, we provide the following sequence:

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit was promised by Christ. Acts 1:5—“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
2. The Holy Spirit came to believing Jews on the Day of Pentecost. This is described in Acts 2:1-4—“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
3. Joel 2:28-32 is quoted in Acts 2:17-21, to link the Spirit described by Joel with the events of Pentecost moderated by Peter. Acts 2:16-17—“No, this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel. In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”
4. The Holy Spirit’s coming to the Gentiles is described in Acts 10:44-45— “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers [Jewish converts] who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” (cf., Acts 15:8)
5. Following the coming of the Holy Spirit, there was a time when apostles would follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in dispensing the Spirit to believers. This was done by the apostles “laying hands” on converts. Acts 19:6—“When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.” (cf., Acts 8:15-17)
6. When the presence of the Holy Spirit was widespread among believers, the ministry of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ began. He directed the apostles in their ministries, even telling them when to go or when to stay, as we see in Acts 16:6-7, which says, “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.”

The Church Age is a unique time for the special ministry of the Holy Spirit, whereby all believers are occupied by Him, and thus have new privileges of spiritual motivation and empowerment not generally available before. This new opportunity is special and powerful, and should not be slighted or neglected, nor should it be confused with methods used by the Holy Spirit prior to the Church Age.

This is important: For a believer to attempt to *transplant* methods used by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, or during the time of Christ’s earthly ministry, will only dilute...and possibly disrupt...His current provision and ministry for that believer. God can deal with us as He chooses, but there are certain specific ways delineated in the Word that clearly describe His interaction with us during the era of the church. The rest of this part (Part Six) provides details on this process...this relationship.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What was the new opportunity of grace that came to all believers at Pentecost?

**Question 2.** What privileges does the indwelling Spirit bring to Church-Age believers?

**Question 3.** True or False: The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also referred to in Scripture as the indwelling of God, or Christ.

## *Other Scriptures*

**John 14:16-17**—And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

**Acts 1:8**—But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

**John 16:13**—But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

## *Remember*

The Holy Spirit was anticipated in the Old Testament and promised by Jesus. The practice of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers began at Pentecost and will continue throughout the Church Age. This creates unique opportunities for us not previously available on a widespread basis.

## *C. Specific Roles of the Holy Spirit*

We will look at a number of roles occupied by the Holy Spirit. He is there to guide us, teach us, motivate us, empower us, fill us, enable us, and cleanse us.

We studied before one of the roles of the Spirit, which is to teach us. When we are in fellowship, and are praying for wisdom, we will be prepared to listen to the Word; and when we believe what we hear, the truth will process into our hearts, where we can receive it as wisdom...ready to be applied to experience. The moving force that carries the words from Scripture to our ears to our brains to our hearts to our experience is the Holy Spirit. He transforms knowledge to understanding and then to wisdom, and implants His truth in us in ways that enhances our access to His strength and grace.

Another role of the Spirit is to strengthen us. The whole idea of maturity is about building strength,

meaning the relative degree of faith that we exhibit toward God. Faith grows through increased understanding of Scripture and enduring God's training. We talk about "building spiritual muscle", but building strength is not about refining our abilities and competencies so WE can get stronger. It is not personal strength that we need, but GREATER CONNECTION WITH THE ONE WHO IS ALWAYS STRONG...THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Our connection with God gets stronger as we use the techniques and believe the promises consistently, which enables the Holy Spirit to control us and produce divine good through us. We do not actually become stronger; rather, we increase our access to *God's greater strength*...by faith.

Another important role for the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. The ultimate fruit which the Holy Spirit produces is the love of Christ in a believer that is in fellowship and maturing. John 15:13-15 makes this clear:

But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from me what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

When we walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He will honor Christ through us. Remember John 15:26 from the last section: "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." The Holy Spirit is not to tell about Himself, but about Christ. Of course, the Holy Spirit tells us how we interact with the Spirit to bring about a testimony for Christ. But telling the world at-large about the Holy Spirit is pointless, whereas testifying about Christ will result in eternal salvation for those who believe the message about Him.

The Holy Spirit also played a role in the life of Christ on earth. Luke 4:1 says, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert...." Verse 14 follows with this: "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside." In verse 18, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

The Holy Spirit was instrumental throughout the life of Christ, and was even the means for His preparation for death, as we see in Heb. 9:14a, which says, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God...." Christ depended on the Spirit for every breath and every step that He took. That is how it's supposed to work in *our* lives.

Another role that the Holy Spirit performs is the completion of our "rebirth", taking us from eternal condemnation to eternal life. This is illustrated in 2 Thess. 2:13b, which says, "...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." 2 Cor. Eph. 2:18 shows this again, saying, "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." And John 3:5 adds, "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the

kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” (Also see Titus 3:5-6.)

We have examined the role of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in *all* believers. This is a role of the Holy Spirit that is unique to this Age. All believers get this, but we have learned that the follow-up role for this one, which is for the Holy Spirit to *control* us, may not be in operation for all believers, because of the presence of unconfessed sin. When a believer is controlled by the sinful nature, rather than the Holy Spirit, the indwelling then becomes meaningless, in a temporal sense. For Him to control us, the sinful nature must be dormant, and we must be CLEAN.

1 Jn. 4:13-15 describes this indwelling nicely: “We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” Eph. 1:13-14 adds this: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...” When God moves in, He owns the space He occupies, even though there are times that we choose not to allow Him to control it.

The Spirit has many functions. We will see a few more of them in the following:

- **The Holy Spirit was involved in creation.** Gen. 1:2—“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”
- **The universe is renewed and sustained by the Holy Spirit.** Ps. 104:30—“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”
- **The Holy Spirit intercedes for us.** Rom. 8:27—“And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”
- **The Holy Spirit actually prays in our place.** Rom. 8:26—“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”
- **The Holy Spirit is involved in giving believers gifts** which are used to build up fellow believers. I Cor. 12:4-6—“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”
- Here is another passage indicating that **the Spirit is the One Who gives spiritual gifts.** I Cor. 12:11—“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”
- **The Holy Spirit uses our gifts to enable believers to help each other grow** in faith, love, and maturity for greater service to God. Heb. 10:24—“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”
- **The Holy Spirit can give specific directions**, though directions in this age are most reliably received from the Word of God. Acts 8:29—“The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’”
- **The Holy Spirit told the apostles His preference in specific instances.** Acts 15:28—“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything be-

yond the following requirements....”

- **The Holy Spirit restrains sin.** II Thess. 2:6—“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.”
- **The Holy Spirit convicts of sin.** Jn. 16:8a—“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin....”

As we can see, the Holy Spirit does many wonderful things. We will see others along the way as we move toward an understanding of how we can go *beyond* accessing His power to actually *walking* in it...to make our lives meaningful, fruitful, and well-directed.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What do we mean when we say we want to “increase our strength”?

**Question 2.** If the role of the Holy Spirit is being fulfilled in our lives, what is the most important quality in the character of Christ that will be exhibited?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Acts 5:32**—We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey [by believing in] him.

**Gal. 3:14**—He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

**1 John 4:13-15**—We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

**Rom. 8:9**—If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

**Col. 1:27**—To whom God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.

## *Remember*

The Holy Spirit plays many roles, because He is God. He is the Creator, the Savior, and the Father...the full Deity of the Godhead. We distinguish them only for our understanding of their roles, but they are One, and we can relate to All of them by relating to One of them. In this Age, our *primary* relationship has been passed from Jesus Christ to His Spirit, and the Spirit is the One we want to engage. His role is our current preoccupation.

## Chapter 24

# Internal Make-up of Man

### *In This Chapter...*

*A. The Mind*

*B. The Soul*

*C. The Spirit*

*D. The Heart*

*E. More on the Heart, a Chart, and Verses*

### *A. The Mind*

As we begin a study of our internal parts, it should be noted that this is not a psychological or scientific discussion. We do not feature the studies and views of mental-health theorists and scientists, and are not generally concerned with parts of our bodies, including the brain, in this study. We are interested in knowing more about the “inner-being” categories we see in *Scripture*. We want to see these in the light of the Word, the best source for knowledge on the non-material make-up of a believer.

Heb. 4:12 indicates that Scripture divides soul and spirit, and is a judge of the motivations of the heart. The Bible, therefore, distinguishes our inner parts. 1 Cor. 14:15 says, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” Spirit is spiritual; mind is mental...they are differentiated inner parts of ourselves. Matt. 22:37 shows additional distinctions, saying, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and 1 Thess. 5:23b adds, “May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We want to focus our discussion on those parts of our inner make-up that have to do with our spiri-

tual condition and progress. We will look at four internal entities...non-material parts of ourselves that are at the center of our Christian experience and service. They are the mind, the soul, the spirit, and the heart. Each of these, as a term, corresponds with a specific word from Ancient Greek, and we will identify these as we go along.

The first of these is the *mind*, which is translated from the Greek word *nous*, meaning “intellect” or “understanding”. The mind is not the brain, though it uses the brain as an entry-point for knowledge and truth. The brain processes and stores information, but cannot grasp spiritual truth. The “natural” man cannot perceive the reality of God, and must operate in the dark regarding spiritual matters.

The mind is the part of our inner selves that comprehends the Word, if the conditions are right, but—of course—believers out of fellowship can comprehend truth little better than unbelievers. They can intellectually “perceive” information about God or Christ or faith, but they cannot “internalize” it, meaning it does not process into their innermost parts...the soul, the spirit, and the heart. They “know” it, but they cannot “understand” it.

We want to stick with what Scripture has to say about the mind, and the other parts. The most important distinction we discovered is that the mind—like the soul, spirit, and heart—can be good or bad. Seeing the mind as either spiritually-centered or carnally-driven will give us a picture of how the mind operates in our spiritual lives. We begin with ways in which the mind can be bad, as follows:

- An unspiritual mind creates delusions of grandeur and lives in a state of pride. Col. 2:18b says, “Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.”
- Pride, competition, and greed are the result of a “corrupt” mind. I Tim. 6:5 says, “...and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”
- An unbeliever or a believer out of fellowship will be corrupt in both mind and conscience. Titus 1:15 tells us, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”
- A reprobate (depraved) mind is going to practice all kinds of evil. A reprobate mind comes from not believing God and not knowing God. Such is the state of mind of an unbeliever (possibly some believers). Rom. 1:28-29a says, “Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness...”

The mind can also be good, as we see in the following:

- The law of sin battles against the law of a “mind in fellowship”. A “good mind” will be under attack. Rom. 7:23 says this: “...but I see another law at work in the members of

my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”

- The mind of a believer in fellowship is opened to the truth in God’s Word. Jesus opened the minds of two disciples in Luke 24:45, which says, “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”
- The mind can be controlled by the Holy Spirit (in which case one would be in his “right” mind). When this happens, the righteous requirements of the Law will be fulfilled. The mind connected to divine power is a potent force for good. However, if the sinful nature takes over, the mind will be enslaved by sin. Rom. 7:25b says, “So then I myself in my [right] mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”
- A mind preoccupied by the world will be controlled by the flesh; therefore, God will not be important. A mind can be transformed, however, when it is renewed by the washing of the Word. Rom. 12:2a says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
- When our minds receive renewal by receiving correct information, we can throw away the old self and put on the new. Bible teaching (believed) has the effect of renewing our minds. Eph. 4:23-24 says you can be “made new in the attitude of your minds...” and “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”
- The mind is involved in prayer. I Cor. 14:15a tells us, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind...” (pray with understanding).

When we are spiritual, we will be in our “right mind”. But when we are out of fellowship, we will be “out of our minds” spiritually.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What are the four parts of our inner being that are distinguished in this chapter?

**Question 2.** What is the main function of the mind, in terms of spiritual growth?

**Question 3.** Name one bad thing the mind can do. And one good thing.

## *Other Scriptures*

**Rom. 8:5-7**—Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.



## ***Remember***

The mind comprehends truth, if the believer is in fellowship and controlled by the Holy Spirit. The mind is an integral part of our growth.

## ***B. The Soul***

When we look at the list of four inner parts that we are dealing with in this chapter, we acknowledge that this list is not comprehensive. There are assuredly other “parts” besides these, such as the “will” and the “conscience”, but we will limit our discussion here to the four we have identified. The exception is the inclusion of the “brain” in the chart at the end of Section E.

We now want to examine the soul. The word “soul” comes from the Greek word *psyche*, which means “life”. The soul is life itself, a living being, but not just an ordinary creature...the soul is a moral being, designed to exist for all of eternity, and is distinguished from—and lives beyond—the life of the body. And like the mind, the soul can best be understood by its relationship to our spiritual condition.

The soul has an adversary in the form of sinful lusts. In fact, all of our inner parts encounter this opposition, which is brought on by the sinful nature. Our natures war against our souls. 1 Pet. 2:11 says, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.” Sometimes the soul loses the battle, and that is when the soul goes “bad”.

Acts 14:2 tells us the soul can become evil, as follows: “But the unbelieving Jews raised up and made malignant the souls of the nations against the brothers.” This illustrates the influence that the world and the sinful nature can have on the soul to prompt it to do evil. The world can be bad, but most evil does not come from the outside...it comes from the INSIDE. Jesus said, “There is nothing from outside the man which entering into him is able to defile him. But the things going out from him; those are the things defiling the man” (Mark 7:15). This would suggest that our greatest enemy is ourselves.

We must be alerted as to what happens when the soul is overcome with evil: It becomes *tormented*. One of the consequences for sin is the anguish it brings to the soul. This anguish does not exist in the life of unbelievers...so, welcome to the Christian way of life. Rom. 2:9, quoted from the *Inter-linear Bible*, says the following, which reads a little rough, but makes the point:

But to those who even disobeying the truth, out of self-interest, and obeying unrighteousness, will be anger and wrath, trouble and pain on every soul that works out evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek. (Endnote 1...Endnotes are on p. 125.)

This trouble and pain comes to the **soul**. Disorientation, confusion, depression, loneliness, and panic...these are the effects of sin on the souls of believers. This is “hell on earth”, which we as be-

lievers experience when we practice and hold onto sin. The outcome for a believer who is not living in God's will is *misery*...also known as *unnecessary suffering*. This will come from "discipline"...and from an inner sense of emptiness and sadness as a result of separation from fellowship with God. What child does not suffer on his own, even without punishment, when he knows he has displeased his parents?

But there is hope for the souls of believers. Heb. 10:39 says, "But we are not of those drawing back to destruction, but of faith, to the preservation of the soul." As believers we, first of all, have hope because we do not face the eternal "condemnation" that unbelievers do; and, secondly, we have hope because of God's grace techniques that can remove sin and overpower the sinful nature. There is "hope", then, that we can avert the anguish. When souls are restored to fellowship, the pain of knowing that we have sinned will stop, and the anguish that results from any "disciplinary" process will cease. Suffering may continue, but the nature of the trouble will change from "discipline" to "testing", which is designed to bless us and give us opportunities to grow. Grace operations always strengthen our hope.

When souls are restored and are once again enjoying the fruits of fellowship, they become the medium for the worship of, and service to, Christ...and the way to please God and do His will. Eph. 6:6 describes this, saying, "...not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul." (Endnote 2) Then the soul can live in contentment, rather than anguish.

Jesus used the term "soul" (*psyche*) a number of times, as we see in the following verses:

- Matt. 6:25—Do not worry about your life [*psyche*, soul] what you will eat or drink...is not your life [*psyche*, soul] more important than food...
- Matt. 10:28—Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.
- Matt. 11:29—Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- Matt. 20:28—...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life [*psyche*, soul] as a ransom for many.

The important things to know about the soul are these: It is the *seat of life*; it is the *medium for worship and service*; and it is the *place where we agonize* the most when we walk away from God. More will be given about the soul in Sections D and E.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** The soul is the seat of \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Question 2.** What happens in the soul when we sin?

**Question 3.** When we are in fellowship, the soul is a medium for \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Other Scriptures*

**Ps. 86:4**—Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

**Luke 1:46**—And Mary said, “My soul glorifies the Lord”.

**Ps. 104:1**—Praise the Lord, O my soul.

## *Remember*

The soul is the core of all human life...it lives...somewhere...forever. The soul is also the place where we express reverence toward God and perform service, and it is the part of ourselves that hurts the most when we sin.

## *C. The Spirit*

“Spirit” comes from the Greek word, *pneuma*, meaning “breath”. The spirit is one of the parts of our inner make-up that we want to understand. One thing that we noticed in conducting this study is this: As we move from mind to soul to spirit to heart—we do not see discrete and separate units from one part to the next. Our inner life seems to consist of a continuum, whereby each of our inner parts is joined with the other parts in fluid connections that begin with the mind, progress through the soul and spirit, and end up at the heart.

The spirit is often used interchangeably with the soul. It has many qualities in common with the soul, but it seems to have a stronger connection with the heart and with “spiritual” matters. We will see more on this in Section D. “Spirit” frames the vital principle of life (as does the soul), and seems to be a place where reason occurs, decisions are made, and motivations emerge.

That the spirit performs a function of “perceiving” or “knowing”...and “reasoning”...is implied in several passages, as follows:

- Mark 2:8—Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts....
- Rom. 8:16—The Spirit himself testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God.
- 1 Cor. 2:11—For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?

As it is with the soul, the body is alive because of the presence of the spirit. James 2:26<sup>a</sup> says, “As the body without the spirit is dead....” There is so much similarity between the soul and the spirit that they seem almost identical. When Jesus died, He gave up His “soul” (Matt. 20:28), but He was also said to have given up His “spirit” (Matt. 27:50). And as Stephen was dying, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). The spirit is eternal and will be in the presence of the Lord, the same as the soul.

Also like the soul, the spirit can be bad or good. We see both in Scripture. 2 Cor. 7:1b indicates that the spirit can become “filthy”. This verse says, “...let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” When the spirit becomes dirty, it must be cleansed, so that it will be pure. Then we can move toward maturity and God’s holiness...and we will be trusting Him.

The spirit can be “saved”, just like the soul, as implied in 1 Cor. 5:5, which says, “...hand this man over to Satan, so that the flesh may be destroyed [ultimate discipline for believers] and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.” The spirit will be preserved, even after the body is discarded.

For believers, the spirit is strengthened by the grace of God, when we access that grace through confession of sins and faith in him for provision of our physical and spiritual needs. Paul prayed that the Galatians would continue to access grace for their lives, so that their spirits would be nurtured by the Lord. Gal. 6:18 shows Paul praying that grace would be working for these believers, saying, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”

When grace is tending our spirits, because we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to serve the Lord BY our spirit. Rom. 1:9 describes this, as follows: “For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how without ceasing I make mention of you...” (Endnote 3). Paul served *in his spirit*, just as he called on us to be “doing the will of God from the soul” (Eph. 6:6b). Once again, we see correlation between the soul and the spirit.

We will learn more about the spirit, and its place in our inner lives, in Sections D and E.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** “Spirit” is often used interchangeably with \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Question 2.** Name two similarities between the soul and the spirit.

**Question 3.** What did Paul pray would be “with” the spirits of believers?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Luke 1:46-47**—And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

**Rom. 8:10**—But if Christ is in you, your body is dead, because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

**John 4:24**—God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth.

## *Remember*

The spirit is quite similar to the soul in its nature and in its function. But the Bible “divides” them, so we will watch for distinctions between them in future studies.

## ***D. The Heart***

In the Bible, the term “heart” does not, as some claim, refer to that vital organ that pumps life-giving blood through our veins. The Greek term, *cardia* **can** be used to refer to the physical instrument within us, but the use of this term in Scripture usually envisages the heart as an invisible reality within our spiritual being. Thayer gives us a rundown on *cardia*, telling us that the heart is the center for spiritual life, as follows:

1. It is identified with the “soul”, or the “mind”.
2. It is the center of understanding...the faculty and seat of intelligence.
3. It is the core of the “will” and character.
4. It can be affected and stirred up in a bad way or a good one.
5. It is the seat of thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, emotions, and endeavors. (Endnote 4)

The heart virtually subsumes all the other parts of our inner lives...the mind, the soul, the spirit, and more. The heart also contains the sinful nature, and is the site of the “Temple” in which the Holy Spirit of Christ resides. It is as though a corridor runs down the middle of our hearts, separating our sinful natures from the Holy Spirit. This corridor has doors on either side, which we go in and out of as we move across the hall from the control of sin to the control of the Spirit, and likely back again. Sin changes our location from spirituality to sin, and confession brings us back to spirituality.

The heart is a compound with many buildings, all under the direction of headquarters, or “heart-central”, where spirituality generates “good”, or carnality creates “evil”. The heart is the real “us”...who we truly are. We must use the term “heart” with understanding, and know that the heart is the superintending force for our entire lives, and that everything we are stems from our hearts.

The heart is also a place of intense battles, and a dangerous place, where demons love to visit and solicit our attention and allegiance. Our hearts are vulnerable to attacks from Satan, as well as the world and the sinful nature, and evil can come at us from all sides. Rom. 6:18b says, “...by smooth talking and flattering they deceive the hearts of those who are without guile.” (Endnote 5) Being “without guile” means to be naïve. When scriptural understanding and wisdom are lacking, the heart will be a target for all kinds of deceptive and evil forces that want to pull us away from God and toward self and the world. And we can rationalize just about anything we want to do, no matter how bad it is.

Most of the time, evil originates from within the heart itself. Here is what Jesus said about this:

“What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean’. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’. (Mark 7:20-23)

When it comes to evil, we are largely self-made men. It comes from inside our beings. This is not because the heart is evil altogether, but because of the presence of evil living there, in the form of our *nature*, which we inherited from our fathers as a result of the fall of man in the garden. We want to see several verses that describe evil in, around, and from the heart, as follows:

- **Unbelief and rejection of Bible understanding are the source of evil**, seen as “uncircumcision” of the heart. Acts 7:51—“You stiff-necked people [refusing instruction], with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit.”
- **Unbelief goes on in the heart, and is evil**. Heb. 3:12—“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”
- **The hearts of believers can drift into a dullness of their understanding of truth**. Matt. 13:15—“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”
- **Things we say come out of the heart**. Matt. 15:18—“For the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean’.”
- **Hearts can resist the truth long enough for them to become crystallized into a permanent state of rejection of God**. Eph. 4:18—“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”
- **Since we are able to sense God’s reality through His creation, rejecting Him results in an a state of confusion and a refusal of the truth**. Rom. 1:21—“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
- **Honoring God with words means nothing, if the heart is not behind it**. Matt. 15:8—“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”
- **The heart is the place where evil thoughts originate**. Matt. 9:4—“Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, ‘Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?’”
- **For good to come from us, our hearts must be pure**. Acts 8:21—“You have no part in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.”
- **When we do not pay attention to God’s Word, and do not know His ways, we will make mistakes**. Heb. 3:10—“That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’”
- **The heart that will not show a humility that prompts the confession of sins will accumulate divine discipline**. Rom. 2:5a—“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself...”
- **The heart can be a dark place of incurable evil**. Jer. 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is incurable; who can know it?”

But the heart can also be a good place. When we explore the goodness of the heart, we are entering the study that will take place throughout the rest of this “part” (Part Six). We are trying to learn how to “walk in the Spirit”, because it is only through the Spirit that good can come from us. God is the origin of good, and any goodness exhibited by us starts with Him. Oh, sure, there are “good” deeds that people do all the time in the name of altruism, but we are not talking about “human good”...we are talking about “divine good” that comes from God.

Heb. 13:9 says, “It is good to be strengthened by grace....” 1 Thess. 3:13 adds, “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” Where does the strength come from? God. Where does goodness come from? God. The “truest” heart is one that is humble, and recognizes that God must fill the heart and control the mind for us to be “holy and blameless”. If we try to achieve this without Him, we will do more harm than good.

The heart is the place of opportunity to do “good” and follow God. It is rich and fertile ground for truth and faith. It is the place where we meet God. It is the place where fruit blossoms. It is the actual place where the Christian life is lived, and is the repository for all that God provides for our growth and production. It is the site of the Most Holy Place where we seek mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Unfortunately, we have a sign in the window of our heart which reads, “Sin Nature on Board”.

The heart is good to the degree that it is dominated by the Spirit of God. And it will be bad to the degree that our confidence is placed in ourselves, or that we succumb to our own evil propensities.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Where is “headquarters” for our spiritual operations?

**Question 2.** True or false: Evil *usually* originates from Satan and the world.

**Question 3.** When is the heart good?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Matt. 11:29b**—...I am gentle and humble in my heart [where humility resides], and you will find rest for your souls.

**Ps. 28:7**—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

## *Remember*

The heart is the center for our volition, and for all our non-material parts. From the heart comes evil, but also from the heart comes faith, which is based on understanding. With faith, and application of all the grace techniques, every believer can develop a good heart...filled with all the goodness of God.

## ***E. More on the Heart, a Chart, and Verses***

There are several additional things we want to point out about the heart. The following considerations should help round out our understanding of the heart:

1. Volition operates in the hearts of believers, providing impetus to choose or reject God's direction. Volition motivates the hearts of unbelievers to choose to accept or reject Christ. When Christ is accepted, the veil between the new believer and God is taken away. After salvation, sin restores the curtain between our hearts and God. He is there, but behind the curtain. When fellowship is restored through confession, that curtain is opened again, so that we can access, or "draw near" to God. (Much more on this in the much-anticipated Part Seven.) Volition is our determiner to seek this closeness to God, or to go our own way. If we *choose* in our hearts to seek Him, we will find him.
2. The heart sets purposes and makes decisions. 2 Cor. 9:7 says, "Each man should give as he has decided in his heart to give...."
3. The heart can make determinations and resolutions, as we see in 1 Cor. 7:37, which says, "But he who stands firm in heart...." (Endnote 6) This elliptical phrase tells us that the heart is a place where decisions are made, and resolve is set.
4. The heart is the place where reasoning takes place. Mark 2:6 confirms this, saying, "But some of the scribes were sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts...." (Endnote 7)
5. The heart thinks and plans. Heb. 4:12 says the Word is "able to judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Endnote 8)
6. The things that we value determine the focus of our hearts. When we seek first God's kingdom, it is because we value God and spiritual things, as clearly enunciated in Matt. 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
7. The heart can have joy or sorrow. It is a place where our strength can fail, and anguish can be felt. Ps. 38:8-10 describes this, as follows: "I am feeble and utterly crushed. I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes."

As we continue to explore the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and our place in Him, we will see how we interact with Him to bring the greatness of God right down to our finite selves, and give the world a glimpse of His beauty.

The next page contains a chart showing the internal, non-material make-up of man.



This table shows additional characteristics of the non-material parts of man that are subsumed in the heart, with distinctions for each. NOTE: A complete list of verses corresponding with these parts can be found on the following page.

**Chart on the Internal Make-up of a Christian**

<b>Brain</b>	<b>Mind</b>	<b>Soul</b>	<b>Spirit</b>	<b>Heart</b>
Physical Temporal Decaying Sense-oriented Perceives facts/ideas	Perceives truth Base for understanding Spiritual reasoning Sober judge Can be opened May be depraved May be fleshly Can be renewed	Life Self Moral being Eternal Has volition Can love Can be blameless Can be evil Can anguish Can do God's will Can be saved Can be condemned Can serve God	Sustains life Rational Knowing/deciding Base for action A synonym for soul Can be saved Can worship Can pray Can be filthy Can be renewed Can be preserved Can have attitude Spirit speaks to spirit Grace can be with Can glorify God	Spiritual-life center Soul or mind Seat of passion Determines purposes Seat of intelligence Will Character Can be good Can be bad May reason Satan may control Dark when sinful Stores Scripture Deceivable Makes decrees Decision maker Where Spirit resides Shows light of Christ God can influence Sets purpose May be established Lord may direct Source of charity Must be pure to pray Errs if ignorant Center of faith Has thoughts Has intentions Grace stabilizes Must be pure God sees and knows Where "sin nature" is

## Scriptures for the Greek Words Translated as Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Heart

**The Mind—*nous*:** Lk. 24:45; Rom. 1:28; 7:23, 25; 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:15; 2 Cor. 2:18; 2 Th. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:15.

**The Soul—*psyche*:** Matt. 2:20; 6:25; 10:28, 39; 11:29; 12:18; 20:28; 22:37; Lk. 12:20; Acts 3:23; 14:2; 20:10; Rom 2:9; 13:1; 1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; 6:19; 10:39; 12:3; 1 Pet. 2:11.

**The Human Spirit—*pneuma* (same word used for the Holy Spirit elsewhere):** Matt. 26:41; 27:50; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 18:25; Rom. 1:9; 12:11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 6:20; 14:14-15; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 4:23; 1 Th. 5:23; 2 Th. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 4:12; James 2:26.

**The Heart—*cardia*:** Matt. 6:21; 9:4; 11:29; 12:34-35; 13:15; 15:8, 18; 22:37; Mk. 2:6; Jn. 12:40; Acts 2:37; 5:3; 7:51; 8:21; 11:23; 15:9; 16:14; Rom. 1:21, 24; 2:5, 15-16, 29; 5:5; 6:17; 10:8, 10; 16:18; 1 Cor. 4:5; 7:37; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:15; 4:6; 8:16; 9:7; Gal. 4:6, 18; Phil. 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:2; Heb. 3:10, 12; 4:12; 8:10; 10:22; 13:9; James 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:23.

## Chapter 25

# Ages: Law vs. Spirit

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Law vs. Grace*
- B. Christ Brings a New Law*
- C. The Holy Spirit Brings Freedom from the Law*
- D. Law vs. the Spirit*
- E. Law (Flesh) vs. Grace (Spirit) Chart*

## *A. Law vs. Grace*

So...what's the big deal about the "Law"? It was something the Jews did back in the day, and we are not under that system, so it should not affect us. But, alas, the tendency to make the Law mandatory is a *big problem* in the Church Age. There is a current that is running counter to grace, churning in pools and eddies, trying to drag believers back under the Law. Salvation is clearly by grace, and the Christian life is to be lived by grace, but we constantly tend to make Christianity a matter of legal compliance. What we want to make clear in this chapter is the effect of practicing the "Law" in the Church Age.

The "Law", as it was used in the Old Testament, was a way of life. It included practical and spiritual applications, and directed all aspects of civic and personal life. This included government, diet, manners, enterprise, and morality, as well as acknowledgement of God, faith, study, confession, prayer, surrender, and so on. The present time of "grace" is primarily concerned with our *spiritual* lives, with benefits and ramifications that overflow into *all* parts of our lives. Grace is more concerned with conditions in our heart than it is our external performance.

In the Church Age, the Law has been *translated* into the grace system. Rather than being eradicated

by grace, it is—as we shall see—fulfilled by it. The Law has been revised in the New Testament to point to and feature grace, and has been absorbed into it. Grace today upstages the old Law, and leaves it powerless, except for those who voluntarily embrace the Law as a means for living the Christian life.

One great distinction between the Age of the Law and this one is the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All believers in the Church Age have the indwelling Holy Spirit, whereas only a small number of believers under the Law had this privilege, and only on specific occasions and for limited amounts of time. The Holy Spirit provides special enablement for living in the Church Age, or Age of Grace, because this age offers special challenges and requirements that are *more intense* than those existing under the Law. Grace provides new standards which are more “impossible” than the tenets of the Law, but grace also offers *more resources* to do the *more difficult*.

An example of a more-difficult requirement under grace is that we are to *love everyone*. This is not a natural condition, and requires the full force of spirituality for it to occur. If you think loving everyone is easy, then you do not understand what this kind of “love” demands. Godly love is being called for, and only God can generate it. It is “humanly” impossible to duplicate His love, which is why we need Him controlling us and operating within us to do this difficult thing.

In this Age of Grace, the involvement of the Holy Spirit is specifically earmarked for salvation...and then for Christian living. At salvation, we have the following events, all produced by the Holy Spirit:

- We are born (again) by the Spirit.
- We are indwelt by the Spirit.
- We are baptized by the Spirit.
- We are sealed by the Spirit.
- We are filled with the Spirit. (See Part One, Chapter Two, page 13, for more.)

The first four of these ( and there are others, to be sure) are permanent and unchanging, regardless of the “holiness” achieved by the believer. The last one, being “filled” with the Spirit, is temporary and intermittent, and is dependent on the ongoing “cleansing” of the believer through confession. Each believer will be “filled”, or controlled, by either the Spirit...or by the sinful nature...at any given time.

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit allows grace systems to operate in our lives as grace assets; these give us a clear pathway to spirituality and effective living. Old Testament believers *did not have this level of assistance* from the Holy Spirit. What a favor and advantage it is to be occupied by the Holy Spirit, and to be able to count on Him to do the work that the Age of Law showed we could not successfully complete.

The Law demonstrated that we are inadequate to meet God’s standards, which is why we must not return to that system as a way to live the Christian life. Unfortunately, ALL BELIEVERS OPERATE UNDER THE LAW SOME OF THE TIME, AND SOME BELIEVERS OPERATE UNDER THE LAW ALL OF THE TIME. This is not good. We will explain.

The law plus a believer equals failure; whereas grace plus a believer equals success. We must look squarely at ourselves in this moment, and ask ourselves where we are.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What happened to the Law when the Age of Grace began?

**Question 2.** True or false: The stringent requirements of the Law were more difficult than are the requirements for living under the Age of Grace.

**Question 3.** What is the one condition in our relationship with the Holy Spirit that is temporary?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Gal. 4:6**—Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

## *Remember*

The Law was a harsh and exacting system, but the job of following “grace” is even harder. The demands of grace are more “impossible” than the demands of the Law, which requires the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable us to meet them.

## *B. Christ Brings a New Law*

Law vs. grace is largely not understood by believers, except by those who sit at the feet of pastors who rightly divide and diligently teach the Word of Truth. “Law enforcement”, which means trying to get everyone to follow the divine Law, or some facsimile thereof, is propounded from pulpits and lecterns around the country, because of an unrelenting confidence in human sufficiency. Great emphasis, then, is placed on adherence to a “code of conduct” that relies on human strength and ingenuity, rather than on the grace of God. The problem with this course of action is this: When we set out to “please God” on our own, we will be operating in the flesh, and will be out of God’s favor...trudging along without the provisions of grace. Satan loves it when we are focused on codes, rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit. He can handle the self-movers.

Keathley said this about the Law: “The law, or any other system of ethics, while it exposes our sin, cannot make us righteous or deliver us from the power of sin.” (Endnote 9) Any system purporting to make us “righteous” that does not embrace *real* power for delivery from sin will have just the opposite effect.

The Law is a mysterious and elusive thing. We are attracted to it like a moth to the flame. Yet it is a trap...a prison, from which we must be set free. We are born into this prison, and we will not be free from it until we figure out how to escape it. But escape we must, and the way to do this, we

believe, is found in these studies. Relief from the Law comes from **understanding** the role of the Spirit, the perfection of grace, the danger of sin, the snare of legalism (law-keeping), and the pathway of liberty and power.

Grace is the “new law” that Christ brings. This new law...or grace...is focused on the person of Christ and the work of His Spirit in our lives. Col. 2:13-17 contrasts the “old” and the “new”, as follows:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them by the cross. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The old law is the “written code”. The new law is the “reality” of Christ’s ministry, which opened wide the door of grace. The Law foreshadowed Christ’s ministry, and demonstrated man’s inability to be good enough to save himself. It also condemned man, because of his inadequacy to meet the Law’s requirements. Our job now is not to KEEEP the Law, but to participate in Christ’s completed work so that the Law can be FULFILLED by GRACE METHODS.

Many Christians rely on their own resources to generate “good” in their lives. They believe finite man can actually impress an infinite God, or produce divine righteousness. This is ludicrous! We cannot do it! Satan’s delusion, the lie that he convinces us to say, is this: I CAN!

Col. 2:20 says, “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules?” We submit to the rules of the Law, because we have faith in ourselves, rather than God. We have an exaggerated view of our own capabilities. And when we believe in ourselves, and attempt to live by keeping the law, we are submitting to its ownership of our thoughts and purposes. Under the Law, we cannot operate in grace, and any good that comes will be man-generated...not the divine good that comes from God.

With the “new law”, we are given a “new self” to help us meet it. Col. 3:9-10 tells us about the “old” and “new” self, as follows: “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” When we accept Christ, the “old self” is taken off, and a “new self” is given. This self is instant, complete, and permanent...in the form of the imputed righteousness of Christ. This is our *position*. But there is also a temporal aspect of that “self”, which is one that will need to undergo construction. This is our *condition*. This self will be built up over time, based on our commitment to growth. This is a “self” which is “being renewed”, or is *in the process of becoming new*. This needs a little more explanation.

We must understand that we don’t get a new *nature* at salvation. We get the Holy Spirit and the ability to learn Scripture, pray, and so on. Our temporal “self” becomes “new” as we learn the Word,

train, and mature, but notice this: *It is a product of the Holy Spirit*, not human effort. Unfortunately, our sinful *nature* is still with us. The permanent “new man” we get at salvation gives us a *position* before God, while the temporal, *potential* “new man” can evolve, based on our *condition*. This condition will be seen as a constantly-fluctuating state of spirituality, and a relative degree of maturity. For us, the real “new man” is essentially a believer in fellowship, constantly growing spiritually.

Eph. 4:20-24 shows us the application of the “new man” as a product of growth, saying the following:

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

So...we have a new life that is permanent, given to us by the indwelling Christ. But then we also have a new life that is a work in progress. This is the development of the new self, which will grow through an understanding of grace...and by the use of grace techniques. The more our “new self” develops, the more we will be operating under grace, rather than under the Law. In fact, the “new self” is “new” to the extent that it is operating in the power of the Spirit.

The new “self” participates in the new “law”, and the new law is the life of Christ, lived out in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are under grace, we will be out from under the domination of the Law and will be living in God’s power. Life under grace is characterized by God’s righteousness and goodness. Life under the Law is controlled by the Law, and is inevitably characterized by sin and self-righteousness.

2 Cor. 3: 6 tells us that the New Covenant (the promise of grace) is NOT based on the Law, but on the Holy Spirit. This verse says, “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter (the Law), but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The Law kills, because no man can meet its standards. It highlights the insufficiency of man. Grace gives life, because it allows God to meet His own standards in us. It highlights the sufficiency of God.

Gal. 5:18 caps it for us: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” When we are controlled by the Spirit, in short, we are under grace, and not under the Law.

The ever-present weight of the Law hangs over our heads, waiting to crush us under the heaviness of its impossible demands. And if we try to support this weight, we will be flattened. That is why the Holy Spirit was sent...to keep the weight of the Law from making spiritual pancakes of us all. This is more true now than ever before, because of the “enhanced” Law that the New Testament provides, which is even more rigorous than the Old Testament version. We need the support that comes from grace.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** True or false: The Law can deliver us from the power of sin. Why or why not?

**Question 2.** What is our greatest misconception about living by the written code of the Law?

**Question 3.** Successful construction of the “new man” is based on what two conditions?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Col. 3:1-2**—Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

**Gal. 5:16**—So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

**Col. 2:23**—Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

## *Remember*

Christ brought a new law, called “grace”. This law is more stringent than the old one, but the new system provides more help. It is as though the weights we are asked to lift are heavier, but our arms are “bionically-assisted”. We can do anything through the strength that Christ gives us.

## *C. The Holy Spirit Brings Freedom from the Law*

Circumcision is the outward sign that a man is a Jew. But things are not that simple, because the “walk” of a believer, Old Testament or New, is a matter of the condition of the heart. Rom. 2:28-29 makes this very clear, as follows:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.

Real circumcision takes place in the heart, an operation performed by the Holy Spirit to permanently mark us and identify us as children of God. The Law marks us as craven sinners, but the



Spirit overwrites the Law to mark us as righteous, at the time we are saved.

After our initial “marking”, our goal is to live up to our identity with Jesus Christ by accessing the tools that enable us to live in His strength. Christ removed the Law as an obstacle to us, and gives us His Holy Spirit to help us achieve an experiential righteousness that matches the imputed righteousness that is ours forever.

The Law provides standards, but does not provide the means for us to keep it. The new Law provides even greater standards, but also makes available the power for us to meet them. The difference is in the *power*. Only the Spirit has the power to perform divine good—to meet the *real* standards. This is why we must be *out from under the Law*, and *walk in the Spirit*.

For those who have been “circumcised in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and who live their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit, there will be liberty. But from what? You guessed it...from the Law! 2 Cor. 3:7-18 gives the full process for getting liberty through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Take time to read this passage, quoted at the end of this section, and then follow along as we analyze its meaning, as follows:

- Vv. 7-11 tells how Moses’ face was glowing so brightly after receiving the Law that the Israelites could not even look at him. They had to cover their faces. But now a “new” law has been implemented, and the brightness that comes with this law is even brighter than Moses’ face. The Law condemned for sin, but was *still bright*; how much brighter can we expect the light of the Holy Spirit to be, since He brings forgiveness and righteousness. In other words, the Holy Spirit overshadows the Law.
- Vv. 12-15 tell us the Israelites could only look at Moses when his face was covered by a veil. That veil is still being used by unconverted Jews (and anyone else to whom this applies), only now it is over their hearts. Their eyes are still on the Law of Moses, and this covers their hearts and prevents truth from entering. Focusing on the Law prevents one’s seeing and focusing on Jesus Christ. This is true for unbelievers concerning salvation, and true for believers if they choose to live their lives under the Law, instead of by the Holy Spirit. Verse 14b says Christ alone can take away the veil, specifically stating, “...only in Christ is it taken away.”
- V. 15 says, “Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Whenever a believer decides to accept by faith the message of Christ and the work He has completed, the veil is taken away. I believe a second application can be taken from this verse, which is that the darkness of carnality will be removed whenever a believer returns to fellowship through confession.
- Vv. 16-18 gives a beautiful description of how the Christian life is supposed to be lived. Here is what this passage says:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit controls, there is freedom from the Law. We are soaring in the open skies of a new liberty...borne by the lifting power of the Holy Spirit. The “unveiled faces” are the hearts and minds of people who 1) have become believers, and 2) are filled with the Spirit. They are, therefore, reflecting the light of Christ and being transformed more and more into His likeness. And where does this come from? It “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (v. 18).

The passage above goes along with Rom. 3:19-20, which says this:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

We should not focus on the Law at all...it is a non-issue. When we give credence to the Law as the way to be spiritual, we will attempt to keep it. But, even then, we will observe its commands selectively...here and there...usually within areas in which we are stronger. But absolutely no one—outside of Jesus Christ—can, or ever has, kept *all* of the Law. “Every mouth is silenced” and “the whole world is accountable before God” (v. 19). So the Law cannot declare anyone righteous, because to be “righteous” by God’s standards, we would have to keep EVERY SINGLE LAW...PERFECTLY. And we can’t. That’s why we must follow grace and not the Law.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Real circumcision is that which is done in the \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Question 2.** When we speak of the liberty which the Holy Spirit brings, who or what is the captor from which we are freed?

**Question 3.** If the Law cannot make us righteous, what can?

**Question 4:** What is missing from the Law that keeps it from helping us be spiritual?

## *Other Scriptures*

**2 Cor. 3:7-18**—Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it

taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

## ***Remember***

The Law cannot make us spiritual. Rather, it condemns us. This is why we must turn to grace—grace methods and grace provisions—to enable us to walk and live in the power of our God, Who has planned to do for us that which we cannot do ourselves.

## ***D. Law vs. the Spirit***

The importance of this discussion on the Law is found in the size of the problem that the Law is to us, without our even knowing it. In a sense, anything that does not fall within the purview of “grace” falls under the Law, so it is important to stay out from under the restrictions of the Law, and remain free, in the open ranges of grace.

To firmly and finally establish the contrast between the Law and grace, or the Law and the Spirit, we will explore selected passages from Galatians 3, 4, and 5, that show the differences clearly. We will not include it here, but Rom. 5, 6, 7, and 8 also distinguish the glories of spirit-filled living, as opposed to the dangers of law-keeping (also known as “legalism”). These are covered in a previous book: *Studies on Walking in the Spirit*.

In Gal. 3:1-2, Paul admonished the Galatians, saying the following:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard.

He reminds them that they were saved by believing, and then he follows with a reference to the way they are to live....not by keeping the Law, but by the same kind of faith that brought them salvation. Verses 3-5 show what he said about this:

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

They knew they had not been saved by the Law, yet now they were trying to attain their spiritual goals by keeping the law. The spiritually-sustaining effects of faith are stopped when attempts are made to keep the Law by one's own “human” effort.

Gal. 3:10 adds this: “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’” We cannot keep the *entire* Law, so we are cursed...without exception...if we rely on the Law to get God’s approval. Verses 11-12 adds more, as follows: “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, ‘The man who does these things will live by them.’” If we live by the Law, and attempt to be righteous by observing it, we will be *under* the Law, and will be judged by its standards...and we will not be under grace. We remain saved, but will not receive “grace to help” when we need it.

Gal. 3:25 says, “Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” So when we attempt to keep the law, we do this all on our own. We are choosing the Law as our ticket to human and divine approval, based on our interminable belief that *we can be good*. This is the work of the flesh, where self-confidence upstages faith in God. Flesh (the sinful nature) wants to be in charge, and the Law is a seemingly legitimate way to bring this about. When we try to keep the Law, we are trusting our flesh, so the flesh *loves* the Law...because it leads away from grace.

If we could summarize Gal. 4 in one sentence, it would read, as follows: “No good thing can happen under the Law.” Gal. 4:9 says, “But now that you know God—or are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles [the Law]? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”

Gal. 5:2 says, “Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.” This verse is saying that—if we try to live under the Law (seeking circumcision)—then Christ can’t help us? This does not mean that Christ is still not living within us, but that we have disengaged His power by trying to keep the Law as the means to being righteous and spiritual. Why? Because when we are trying to keep the Law, our behavior (and attitude) is “not of faith”, and so it is a SIN! Sin halts fellowship and cuts off the flow of God’s grace and power into our lives, which means the Holy Spirit is not “helping” us. Living under the Law is a life of carnality.

Gal. 5:3-6 gives an important account of the dangers of law-keeping (based on faith in self) and the value of true spirituality (based on faith in God), as follows:

Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is [ongoing and growing] faith expressing itself through love [the sign for fellowship].

We can commit ourselves to compliance with the Law, and/or indulge ourselves in sin. These will keep us away from the power of God, because we have “fallen away” from grace, meaning that we have stepped back from grace...choosing to go our own way. Gal. 5:16 says, “So I say, live by the Spirit.” Living by the Spirit is returning to grace and staying there, as a result of confession and an ongoing faith. This is the opposite of living under the Law.

Gal. 5:17-18 confirms this, saying,

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Verse 25 tells us that—if we “live by the Spirit”, we should also “walk by the Spirit”. This refers to our eternal *position*: We are eternally *alive* through the Spirit. Meanwhile, our temporal *condition* is designed to be “walked out” in the power of the Spirit. A good *position* is the result of salvation; a good *condition* is the result of confession and faith. If we are “walking in the Spirit”, we will not be attempting to get God’s approval by *keeping rules*.

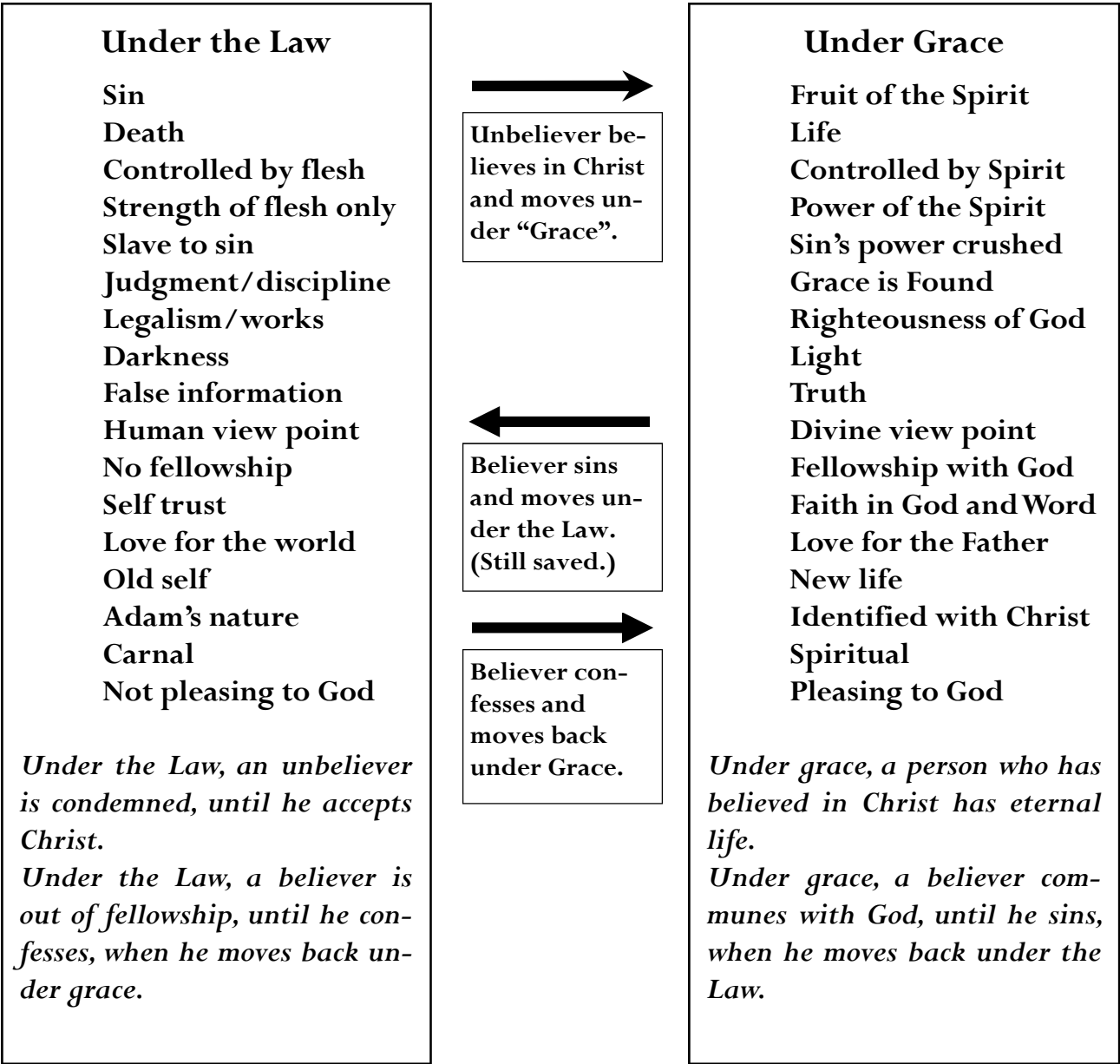
Here’s an important question: When we are out of fellowship, and “under the Law”, who is in charge of us? It is, of course, the *flesh*. So who will be directing our keeping of the Law? The flesh. And what power will be available to enable us to follow the code? That of the flesh...our very own sinful nature...which will have taken over the job of producing good. Isn’t it ironic that the very force that is most likely to violate God’s laws is now left in charge of following them? But it’s all sin, whether we are *violating* God’s standards, or *trying to keep them* in our own strength. By trying to keep the Law we reject the only power that can truly equip us to get into compliance with God’s proscriptions and purposes. No wonder Paul called the Galatians “foolish”.

There is a better way.

Questions, extra verses, and a reminder of the most important points in this section will give way to a chart (next page), which illustrates clearly the differences between being under the Law (flesh), and being under grace (Spirit).

# E. The Law (Flesh) vs. Grace (Spirit) Chart

The following chart shows the flow of a believer from the Law to grace...and back to the Law, if sin or legalism occurs...then once again back to grace at the time of confession. A believer “under the Law” is still saved, but He will be “out of fellowship” and will be ineffective, and likely destructive, in his demeanor. Our objective is to live under “grace”, by walking in the Spirit, rather than under the “Law” by living in the power of our sinful natures. **Compare the columns item by item.**



## Chapter 26

# God's Standards

### *In This Chapter...*

*A. Introduction to God's Standards*

*B. God's Standards*

*C. Conclusion to God's Standards*

### *A. Introduction to God's Standards*

Christian status and standing do not depend on what we DO. If what we do is good, and pleases God, it is because He is behind it. Righteousness from us is an outcropping of our relationship with Him. If this is not true, then we are simply practicing what religions everywhere espouse: morality, ethics, humanity, and semblances of righteousness, generated under conditions of self-dependency. Such practices tend to be nothing more than operations of the flesh, which have no spiritual value.

But if we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, there should be some evidence for this. Our growth and training are headed toward reflecting God's standards, and knowing these standards will help us know where we are going. We are not to try to fabricate these, or try to "act" them out in a shadow-play of imitation, but we are to *wait* on these, as they will come with maturity.

Knowing God's standards will also keep us humble, and reflect to us our failure to meet them. Humble acknowledgement of our failure will get greater results than intense "practice" to perfect our "act". When we realize our limitations to "rise" to the level of God's standards, we will see that we must rely on Him to do what He requires. We will spend time in this chapter looking at the standards, which are prodigious and prohibitive, and then we must find the tools God offers so that we can achieve them.

Those who espouse a "worldly" view for meeting God's standards pose a danger to believers in their

vicinity, because they promote a *facsimile* of righteousness...a “form of godliness”, but without the “power” of the Spirit. Such imitations will not achieve God’s standards. External compliance without internal preparation amounts to nothing. Real compliance can always be traced back to spiritual alignment on the inside...in the heart.

As believers, there is a temptation to see compliance with God’s standards as our staying within some “soft and variable zone of conduct” that we see as acceptable to God. This gives us a degree of comfort...we feel safe, just as long as we are “good enough” to stay in His good graces. We might even keep score to see if our “good” outweighs our “bad”, believing that our conformity will please God. In the end, we wind up thinking that we are “good” enough and that no confession is needed...OR that our score is so low that we are ashamed to admit our wrongs, for fear of greater shame. In either case, we decline God’s mercy, forgiveness, grace, and power, even though these, and only these, can make us “good”.

What we might be ignoring is that—if we violate ONE standard—we violate them all. James 2:10 says, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” Once again, to be able to count on the Law for our goodness, we have to keep it *perfectly*. Enforcement of God’s standards fall into the realm of “no tolerance”. No margins of error exist. His *specifications* are *specific*. No deviation is allowed.

We see the standards and we know we are to meet them, but unfortunately we assume that the way to meet them is to try harder. This is our biggest problem: faith in ourselves, rather than God. To meet God’s holy requirements, we must access His holy Word to understand His holy nature...and man and manage the tools He offers to enable us to do what He commands.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What is the place of determination and effort in achieving God’s standards?

**Question 2.** True or false: Believers should have a chart of God’s standards and keep score to see if they are being met, in the hope of being “good enough”.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Thess. 4:1**—Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

**Eph. 5:1-2a**—Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love [fellowship], just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us....



## ***Remember***

God's standards are endless and exact. They are lofty...well beyond our reach. We need a boost, which is exactly what God offers, and precisely what we are trying to acquire. We want to know how to do what we can't do...really *can't* do...yet are *required* to do. This not only *seems* impossible...it really is. But not with God.

## ***B. God's Standards***

The standards that comprise God's parameters for our behavior and thought patterns are fully disclosed in Scripture. These consist of things that God despises...and things He commands. The string of requirements is endless, and cannot be entirely encompassed within a few pages of text, but it is our prayer that we will provide a discussion here that will highlight and elucidate God's standards.

To get started, we see in Prov. 6:16-19 seven things that God hates. These seem to be *categories*, rather than individual acts or attitudes, and serve to encompass most things we would consider "bad" or sinful. Here is the list:

1. Pride. Pride is *focus on self*, which includes any condition or practice that can be described with a word that begins with self: such as self-centered, self-satisfied, self-sufficient, self-confident, self-motivated, self-dependent, self-absorbed, self-pleasing, self-serving, and self-sustained. Some of these may represent the best forms of humanity, but they are the worst forms of spirituality. Self-anything represents self-interest and faith in *self*. Whether we are attempting to find pleasure, or to perform "righteous" acts, we are doing what God hates, if "self" is not supplanted by "God". Try replacing "self" in the words above with "God" and you will see the difference.
2. Lying. When we lie to others, or to God, or to ourselves, we are leaving honesty behind. This is especially a problem when we either ignore...or try to conceal...our sins from God. When believers confess their sins to God to get forgiveness, the most important component in that process, with the possible exception of "humility", is *honesty*. Without honesty, there will be no confession, no forgiveness, and no enabling of the Holy Spirit to help us live our lives.
3. Murder of the innocent. Keep in mind that the enlarged view of murder includes hatred, and even favoritism. Without a proper spiritual walk with God, we will not avoid the root conditions of murder.
4. Wicked schemes. This is planning *anything* that does not consider the will and plan of God. Any plan that excludes God, or that fails to seek Him first, is "wicked". God must be central in our plans. And, of course, any plan for scheduling sinful acts is wicked, as well.
5. Hasty or frantic evilness. Emotional attachments and/or addictions create excitement at the prospect of their fulfilling our fleshly pursuits and habits. These lead to all kinds of

distortions of truth, idol worship, and frantic searches for anything that promises happiness...or that gives temporary relief from misery. This is looking to *substitutes* (instead of God) to find meaning in our lives.

6. False witness. This involves sins of the tongue. When you judge, criticize, or gossip about someone, even if they have behaved inappropriately...especially if you embellish or exaggerate their mistakes or patterns...then you are doing what God hates.
7. Causing division among believers. This is one of the greatest detriments to the church (or a church) fulfilling its mission, and a danger for relations between individual believers. Sometimes in the name of doctrinal hair-splitting we create artificial separations among believers, when the big test is simply that we have each believed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. As long as that condition has been met, we need to lock arms for the battle ahead. And if we see a "better" way to do God's work, we should follow it, but not use differing beliefs as a cause to foster splits among believers. God hates this.

This list of things that God hates is not exhaustive...it's more representative and introductory. There are many other things that God does not like. There are also things that He wants to see more of. We will look further into both of these.

We have seen "lists" of sins...acts and attitudes that God's standards rule against. We repeat parts of these in the following:

- Types of "wicked" people (from I Cor. 6:9-10):
  - o The sexually immoral (those who commit adultery and fornication)
  - o Idolaters (those who worship other gods, or make anything more important than God).
  - o Adulterers (players, cheaters, swingers, and prostitutes).
  - o Male prostitutes.
  - o Homosexual offenders (part of the wicked).
  - o Thieves (those taking what someone else has earned).
  - o Greedy (those preoccupied with acquiring money, property, or things).
  - o Slanderers (con artists, deceitful in business practices).
- Sins from the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21):
  - o Sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery.
  - o Idolatry and witchcraft.
  - o Hatred, discord, jealousy.
  - o Drunkenness, orgies, and the like.
- Other products of the flesh (Col. 3:5-10):
  - o Sexual immorality.
  - o Impurity (dirty thoughts or actions).
  - o Lust (looking and wanting).
  - o Evil desires (imagining and wanting).
  - o Greed (idolatry and wanting).

- o Anger (of the sinful type).
- o Rage (screaming or destroying things or people in an emotional fit).
- o Malice (hatred).
- o Slander (destroying reputations).
- o Filthy language (forbidden or offensive words).
- o Lying (words do not match the truth).
- Other sins to avoid (Eph. 5:3-4):
  - o Not a hint of sexual immorality.
  - o No kind of impurity.
  - o Absolutely no greed.
  - o No obscenity.
  - o No foolish talk.
  - o No coarse joking.

Many sins are overt and visible; others are not seen, even though they are still prominent; and some are completely off the radar screen...appearing not even to the one doing them. We will try to see as many of these as we can, as we comb through the Scripture in search of divine standards. We will continue to use the “list” format, since most of the “standards” are self-explanatory.

Rom. 1:28-32 presents a picture of evil, citing the following abhorrent conditions:

- Every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity.
- Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice.
- Gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful.
- Inventors of ways of ways to do evil.
- Disobedient to parents
- Senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Yes, of course these are characteristics of unbelievers, but rest assured that believers are also capable of any of these violations of God's standards.

God's standards can create “positive” requirements, as well as prohibitions or proscriptions. Rom. 12:1-21 provides some standards of “good” behavior, interspersed with some “bad”, in the following:

- Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.
- Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.
- Think of yourself with sober judgment.
- Exercise your gifts (examples given are prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, governing, and showing mercy).
- Love must be sincere.
- Hate what is evil.

- Cling to what is good.
- Honor one another above yourselves.
- Keep your spiritual fervor.
- Be joyful, patient, and faithful.
- Share with God's people.
- Practice hospitality.
- Bless, rejoice, and live in harmony.
- Do not be proud or conceited.
- Do not repay evil with evil or take revenge.
- Feed your enemy.

This is just a start; there are many more standards. Ex. 23:1-9 gives us several:

- Do not spread false reports.
- Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.
- Do not pervert justice.
- Show no favoritism on the basis of wealth or poverty.
- Return your enemies' lost animals or goods.
- Do not accept a bribe.
- Do not oppress an alien or a stranger (includes race, religion, national origin, etc.).

Here are some from Jer. 7:6-7, which are standards that the Israelites had to meet to "live in the land":

- Do not oppress the stranger in the land.
- Do not oppress the fatherless.
- Do not oppress the widow.
- Do not shed innocent blood.
- Do not follow other gods.

Jer. 7:9-11 from this same passage is worth quoting. These verses show God's reaction to our violation of the standards just given. Jer. 7:9-11 says this:

Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

This is reminiscent of God's reaction to sins committed by believers as described in Heb. 10:26-31, which is seen as resulting in "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" and other severe punishments. Verse 31 concludes, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The discipline that comes to believers can be "hell on earth", as this passage suggests. This is why we want to understand and live within God's standards, and stay

“cleansed”, as per verse 22.

Rom. 13:5-14 gives us some standards that hit close to home, as follows:

- Submit to civil authorities.
- Pay your taxes.
- Give everyone what you owe him.
- Let no debt remain outstanding.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
- Behave decently, as in the day, not in orgies or drunkenness.
- Do not commit sexual immorality, debauchery, dissension, and jealousy.
- Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Sandwiched among these standards is a reference to the condition of anyone who violates them...he is considered to be “asleep”. We have seen before that spiritual sleep refers to a condition of being out of fellowship due to sin, and we have acknowledged that the only way to return to communion with the Holy Spirit is through confession of our sins to God. Violations of standards put us out...confession always works to put us back in. Once we are returned to fellowship, we will be able to avoid thinking about ways to “gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Rom. 13:14).

We’re still not through. We have many standards yet to review...we will try to be brief and concise. Jude 1:16 gives us other things to avoid as we build ourselves up in our “most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit” (1:20):

- Avoid grumbling.
- Avoid faultfinding.
- Avoid following evil desires.
- Avoid boasting.
- Avoid flattering others for one’s own advantage.

Luke 3:14 adds these:

- Share your goods.
- Don’t extort money.
- Don’t accuse people falsely.
- Be content with your wages.

We could go on and on...here are just a few more:

1. Col. 3:2—Be focused on things above.
2. 1 Pet. 5:5-8—Young men submit to older, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, humble yourselves before God, cast anxiety on Him, be self-controlled, and resist the devil.
3. 1 Pet. 2:11-17—Abstain from sinful desires, live good lives, show respect to everyone,

- submit to every authority (e.g., speed limits), love the brotherhood, fear God, do not use your freedom to cover up evil, and honor the king.
4. Phil. 4:4—Rejoice always, let your gentleness be evident, be anxious in nothing, present your requests to God with thanksgiving.
  5. 1 Tim. 6:8—Be content with food and clothing alone.
  6. Is. 35:3-4—Encourage fellow believers.
  7. Prov. 17:23—Don't reward evil for good.
  8. Prov. 11:24—Don't be lazy!
  9. 1 Cor. 10:14—Flee idolatry.
  10. Gal. 6:2—Bear one another's burdens.
  11. Ps. 28:3—Avoid deception.
  12. Ps. 26:3-5—Avoid evil and evil people.
  13. Ps. 10:2—Don't persecute the poor.
  14. Prov. 28:4—Mind your own business, give help when it is requested, and don't impose your style of help if it is not wanted.
  15. Is. 33:15-16—Walk and speak uprightly.
  16. Matt. 6:1-7—Don't flaunt your good deeds, don't "give" to put on a show, and don't pray to impress people.
  17. Matt. 6:19-34—Store up for yourself treasures in heaven, keep your eyes on the "light", and serve God and not money. Trust God for your provisions and do not worry.
  18. Matt. 5:21-48—Don't be angry with your brother, as that is murder; keep short accounts with fellow believers; and don't look at a woman with lust, as that is adultery.

Finally, we get a guide for personal conduct from 1 Thess. 4:1-12. In this passage, we see the following standards enumerated:

- Be sanctified (confess your sins).
- Avoid sexual immorality.
- Control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable.
- Do not wrong your brother or take advantage of him.
- Live a holy life.
- The man who rejects this instruction is rejecting God (avoid this).
- You have been taught to love each other...do this more and more.
- Lead a quiet life.
- Mind your own business.
- Work hard at your job.

Our goal as believers is to do better. But are we beginning to get the picture of how hard this is going to be? The standards we have cited are *required*, and there are many that were not listed. These standards are staggering, and we can be assured that **we do not live up to them...**and never will, apart from God's empowerment.

To meet God's standards we must *keep on starting* with Him, because it is God Who will keep us go-

ing. We must begin, and begin again, and begin once more...and always...with God. We must *start* with God, and return to God, over and over, which is equivalent to fresh starts and new beginnings made possible by confessing, and then we must *stay* with God by praying, studying, and growing in our faith.

When we focus on God, confess to Him, acknowledge Him, fear Him, TRUST HIM, and thank Him, we have the best shot at achieving the standards He has specified. But we can't start at the middle or the end. We start at "Go", and then add a "d". The purpose of this chapter has been to see God's standards. We will continue to explore ways to meet them.

No questions or added verses or comments. The case for God's standards is self-evident.

## *C. Conclusion to God's Standards*

We are coming to understand what God expects of us, and there is a sense of urgency to do what He expects. We have seen that His standards are daunting and formidable, and readily acknowledge in our innermost selves that we cannot meet them. So the question arises: If we can't live up to God's standards, why would God require them of us? He has set the bar too high for us to clear, and now He is demanding that we jump over it. We can't do it, but we must! What a dilemma!

We must begin to fathom how fervently God wants us to learn that His way of dealing with us is not through some capability inherent in us...but in bringing us to an understanding that the only way we can clear the bar is for God to lift us over it. All He wants from us is our trust that He can and will do it.

Everything God requires, He provides a way to fulfill. When we see God's standards, we should see these as **alerts** for us to reach out for grace assets. The standards are *calls* for us to confess and trust. Our correct response to the standards is to admit that we cannot live up to them, and that we are dependent on God's mercy and grace to satisfy them.

We do the things we shouldn't and don't do the things we should. We are all the same...none of us is good enough...we need help. Paul said it well in Rom. 7:21-25, which follows:

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!—So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Rescue is available, and we must not turn it down.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Since the Law was cancelled, are we still responsible for meeting God's standards?

**Question 2.** When we see or remember God's standards, we should view them as \_\_\_\_\_ to prompt us to confess and trust.

**Question 3.** Where is rescue from our failure?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Rom. 7:16-20**—And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin [nature] living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin [nature] living in me that does it.

## *Remember*

God gives us standards that we can't meet to show us that we must depend on Him to satisfy them. Man cannot be "godly" in himself, but—by the Spirit—we can become "God-like" in Him.



## Chapter 27

# Walking by the Spirit

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Returning to Fellowship*
- B. The Failure of the Flesh*
- C. Intensification of Discipline*
- D. Commands Regarding the Spirit*
- E. The Filling of the Spirit*
- F. Faith Keeps us Connected with the Spirit*
- G. Verses on Faith and Spirituality*
- H. The Walk in the Spirit*

### *A. Returning to Fellowship*

It is probably a good time to catch our breath and look back momentarily at the “familiar”, before proceeding to the “new”. Before we get into the meat of “walking by means of the Spirit”, we want to spend several sections nailing down and fleshing out issues of fellowship, carnality, discipline, and the filling of the Spirit. Please allow some repetition to fully establish these teachings.

We have recognized that mankind is divided into two distinct categories: unbelievers and believers. Believers can then be divided into two subgroups: spiritual and carnal . To delineate these categories, we offer the following mini-chart:

1. Unbelievers are inextricably tied to the Law, which means they are chained to sin and controlled by the flesh. They have no spiritual life. This is their *position*.

2. Believers are *all* freed from the Law, *positionally*, which means they are no longer seen as slaves to sin. Also, they will never be condemned, even though they have sin in their lives. This is because of their *position*. Believers separate into two sub-categories...they are either under the Law (controlled by the flesh), or under grace (controlled by the Holy Spirit). Our objective is to be constantly controlled by the Spirit.

As believers we are to “walk in the light”, and to be “wide awake” spiritually. Eph. 5:14 says, “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” In context, we are to “wake up” from our sleep, which is symbolic of a return from carnality, and then we can “walk in the light of Christ”. We are to wake up and live in His dawning light, where everything is visible. This is a process of bringing our sins to God’s light, so they can be forgiven (1 John 1:5-7). When we “live” in the light, sins stay confessed, and the power of the Holy Spirit within us causes us to come to life spiritually. We wake up, and join the living, to serve God by His Spirit.

But if we do not “live” in the light, we will “die” in darkness. We will explain. Rom. 8:6a says, “The mind of sinful man is death...” When we are out of fellowship, and controlled by the sinful nature, we are spiritually dead, though not in an eternal sense, since the Spirit never leaves us. This is a death into “spiritual dormancy”, which goes on as long as unconfessed sin is blackening our hearts.

Rom. 8:12 continues this morbid outlook, and tells us that believers “have no obligation” to live under the power of the sinful nature, but—when they do—verse 13a tells us what will happen: “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die...” Once again, this is not the death of eternal condemnation, and it is not “physical” death (even though believers can be taken out of life early for persistent control of the sinful nature). This is *spiritual* death, or darkness, which we experience whenever our access to the power of the Holy Spirit is switched off due to sin and self-dependency. In such a state, we will not be pleasing to God (Rom. 8:8), and we will be living in darkness (Luke 1:79).

Spiritual death contrasts sharply with the lively connection we have with the Holy Spirit when we are in fellowship. Rom. 8:6b says, “...but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace...” Life and peace are markers for fellowship, which confirms that a “mind in fellowship” is “controlled by the Spirit”. Without fellowship and the engagement of the Spirit, however, we will be spiritually dead...walking zombies. For our lives to have meaning, we must “stay alive”, by staying in fellowship.

We can summarize our lives in one sentence: **The Christian life is to be lived in fellowship with God, so the Holy Spirit can produce the life of Christ in us.** The purpose behind this process is to enable us to propagate the gospel of Christ and to interact with believers in a way that encourages their growth, as they encourage ours. (We will see this process in more detail in Chapter 28.)

“Fellowship” is seen many times in Scripture. In Phil. 2:1-2, we see “fellowship” highlighted, as follows:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love,

if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

This passage is loaded with fellowship and its outcomes: comfort from His love, tenderness and compassion, and unity with other believers in fellowship. These are all fruits produced by the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 1:22 adds this about fellowship: “Purifying your souls in the obedience of the truth through the Spirit to unpretended brotherly love [signal for fellowship], love one another fervently out of a pure heart.” (Endnote 10). The truth we obey is this: We must be “purified” by means of the Holy Spirit, so we can be in fellowship with Him, and “love one another fervently”. We see fellowship presented again in 2 Cor. 13:14, where Paul admonished believers to stay in fellowship, saying, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Earlier, we examined 1 John 1, where we discovered the way to remove sin and be restored to fellowship, which is by being “cleansed”.

Paul emphasized the importance of being “cleansed” in 1 Thess. 5:23, where he gave a benediction to end his first letter to the Thessalonians. He prayed, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept [found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” *Sanctification* is *cleansing*, which is what we receive when we confess. Sanctification makes us “blameless”, which is the way we want to be when the Lord returns. We will not be *condemned* for “blame”...ever...but it will certainly be embarrassing if we are not using grace assets at the time we see Christ. It is important to remember: Being “blameless” is not something we “do”...it is something we “receive”, when we follow the grace plan.

We will make one more attempt to establish that *we can never make ourselves blameless*. 1 John 1:9 tells us that *we will be forgiven for the sins we know about and confess*. But confession not only gets “forgiveness,” it gets *cleansing from all unrighteousness*! The “left-over” sins, those that remain after naming the ones we know about, are those we cannot remember or did not recognize as sins. These represent “unrighteousness”, or sins in the “unknown” category. These are removed along with known sins, when we confess.

Think about this: It is possible for us to sin and *not even know it*. Look again at God’s standards in the previous chapter. We cannot take a step without stepping on a “sin-mine”. This means we can’t stay “blameless” on our own...**because sometimes we don’t even know when we are sinning!** For us to think we can achieve experiential perfection in our sin-rich environment shows that we either underestimate God’s standards, or overestimate our own performance! But, regardless—if we go constantly to God with our sins—He will forgive all of them, and we *can* be blameless. This is the **ONLY** way we can be blameless!

In the following, we are reminded what our being in fellowship enables us to do, as follows:

- **Pray.** When we are in fellowship, we can pray “in the Spirit”.
- **Understand Scripture.** When we are controlled by the Spirit, we can process spiritual truths into our hearts.

- **Exercise our gifts.** In fellowship, we can exercise our gifts effectively.
- **Rest in God's care.** We can find great comfort in knowing all our needs will be met and everything will be working together for our good, because we are in fellowship.
- **Perform service for God.** The Holy Spirit works through us to produce divine good, when we are in fellowship.

The purpose for being in fellowship is not just so *we* can be more “powerful”...it is to access the strength God offers, so that we can *honor Him* and *fulfill His plan and will* for our lives.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What are the two categories of man?

**Question 2.** What are the two categories of believers?

**Question 3.** What does Eph. 5:14 mean by “waking up”.

**Question 4.** What does “death” mean in Rom 8:6a?

**Question 5.** What is sanctification?

**Question 6.** Being “blameless” is not something we “do”; it is something we \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 John 1:3b**—And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make your joy [a marker for fellowship] complete.

**1 John 1:5-7**—This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**1 John 1:9**—If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

## *Remember*

The place of fellowship through the confession of our sins cannot be denied, and must not be overlooked. Our whole Christian experience and the fulfillment of our purpose depend on it.

## *B. The Failure of the Flesh*

The flesh fails on two fronts, as we see here:

1. The failure of “legalism”. This is the attempt of the flesh to follow a code, seeking to establish its own spirituality through ritual, emotions, and/or good behavior.
2. The failure of “sin”. The sinful nature pulls us into all kinds of sin, some *subtle*, operating below the radar...and some *blatant*, visible to all onlookers.

Both legalism and sin are unacceptable to God, and are **not** products of “faith”. We recall that anything not done from a position of faith is a sin. No matter how minor the sin, we are removed from fellowship when it happens, which gives weight to the point that grace and grace techniques are quintessential assets.

When the flesh, meaning the “sinful nature”, is in charge, we are considered “carnal”, meaning “fleshly”. This “flesh”, however, is not the same as “skin”, even though the body can be involved in sin; this “flesh” involves the whole realm of human functioning. This includes the entire self apart from God, of which Paul said, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:25a)

As we have seen, carnality and spirituality are exclusive sets, with no overlap. We are controlled by the Spirit, or we are controlled by the flesh. Those who might question the abruptness and severity of the loss of fellowship have not understood the **absolute** nature of our spiritual condition. It is completely bi-polar: *positive* or *negative*. There is no “in-between”. (Remember to contrast “spirituality” and “maturity”. Spirituality is *on* or *off*, while maturity slides *up* or *down*, along a scale.)

One thing that sets us back is our myopic view of ourselves as “mostly” doing the right thing, not realizing how far short of God’s standards we fall. It is actually quite rare for a believer to *consistently maintain* the control of the Spirit, and it takes a total commitment to growth and maturity to achieve it.

Remember Rom. 8:6 from the last section, which says, “The mind set on [preoccupied with] the flesh is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” There is no “shade” of death, or state of being “partially alive”. We are controlled by the flesh...or by the Spirit. We are spiritually dead, or spiritually alive. And when we are “dead”, or gripped by the flesh, we can expect the following:

- Loss of the control of the Holy Spirit...He is neutralized within us.
- Divine discipline. (Heb. 12:5-11; Ps. 32:4)
- Loss of rewards in heaven. (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

The sinful nature is always working against our spirituality. It is totally self-serving, self-dependent, and world-focused. The flesh (sinful nature) is the *worst of humanity* when it is chasing sin, and the *best of humanity* when it is trying to “be good”. But it is still only *humanity* at work, so *either* way is “bad”. The outcomes of the “worst” performances are no different from the “best”. They all amount to products of the flesh. Recall Rom. 8:8: “Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

Keathley said this about walking in the flesh:

Those who are in the flesh and do not know God (unbelievers), or those who are walking by the flesh (carnal believers) are incapable of pleasing God. Spirit filled believers are the only ones who have the spiritual capacity to please the Lord. These are those who manifest the fruit of the Spirit. (Endnote 11)

The only hope for the flesh is for it to be cleaned up. 1 Thess. 4:1, combined with 4:5-8, tell us that believers must stay “pure” and “holy” to stay on track. Here is what this passage says:

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more...not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure [unclean], but to live a holy [sanctified...cleansed] life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

But flesh cannot clean itself, and fleshly effort cannot please God. We looked earlier at “circumcision” as a fleshly attempt to placate and please God. But true circumcision is in the heart. In Phil. 3:2-3 Paul said the following about those who count on circumcision to be “holy”:

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh....

The “true circumcision” among believers is identified by three qualities, as seen in Phil. 3:3, just quoted. These include the following:

1. We worship by the Spirit. This means we are serving God in fellowship.
2. We glory in Christ. The light of Jesus Christ shines on us and through us.
3. We have no confidence in the flesh...either to be cleansed or to please God.

We cannot operate at a fleshly level to achieve spiritual purposes. And notice what Paul called those who do this: **evil**. The body in motion, without the Spirit behind it, is simply running in place...stepping lively, but not moving.

John 6:63 caps it: “The Spirit gives [spiritual] life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.” The Spirit and the flesh are, once again, seen in contrast. The Spirit gives life, and the flesh is useless. Only the Spirit can produce spirituality. John 3:6 confirms this, saying, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” From the flesh you get fleshly behavior and attitude; from the Holy Spirit you get spirituality.

And Jer. 17:5 adds, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’” Plain enough.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What are the two fronts on which the flesh operates?

**Question 2.** What can we expect when we are controlled by the flesh?

**Question 3.** What three qualities will be evident in the true circumcision of the heart?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Rom. 3:27-28**—Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

**Gal. 3:3**—Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

## *Remember*

The sinful nature is incapable of causing spirituality or producing divine righteousness. To rely on the flesh is like counting on a tar pit to produce a peach orchard. It will never happen.

## *C. The Intensification of Discipline*

We have looked at discipline several times already, but we want to establish further how intense discipline can become...that is, if we do not confess our sins faithfully and live in God's Word. 1 Cor. 11:28 gives us a look at how severe discipline can be, and reminds us that believers are disciplined as needed, so they will not have to face eternal condemnation. Here is what this passage says:

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

This passage shows us an example of an activity for which preparation is needed. We have seen many other instances when preparation is necessary, such as when we pray or study the Word. The first step in spiritual preparation is confession of our sins. The foregoing passage equates confession with “judging ourselves”, which will prevent our being “judged” by the Lord, and disciplined as a result. Discipline can be horrible, and can even result in “sleep”, which—in this case—is physical death.

There is something that we want to insert parenthetically here. Notice that taking “Communion” is a “right” thing, but that doing it can result in judgment and discipline. We must get this: No matter

what we do, if it is done when we are in a “wrong” condition, it will be **wrong**, and will result in discipline. Repeat: When we do “right” things in a “wrong” condition, they will be classified as “wrong”, and will bring discipline.

Discipline will be as severe as it has to be to get us to use God’s techniques in our daily lives. God’s love for us is unshakable, but *unchecked, uncorrected, unforgiven violation of God’s standards will not go uncontested*. When we sin, discipline begins. The only way to stop it is by getting forgiveness. Lev. 26:14-17 was given to the Jews who were receiving God’s laws, but they inform us as to the kinds of discipline that can come to us as a result of sin. Here is what this passage says:

But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

The consequences shown here sound devastating, but these are just the beginning. Verse 18 in this passage adds, “If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.” God’s objective is seen in verse 19, which says, “I will break down your stubborn pride....” Pride prevents confession and study, and re-directs faith from God to ourselves. This pride must be BROKEN, and God will use discipline to bring this about!

In verse 21, the “seven times” factor becomes “seven time seven”, if pride persists. This, in turn, is multiplied by seven, and this is repeated over and over until the total intensity factor of the discipline reaches a level of 16,807 times that of the original discipline. The description of the kinds of suffering this level of intense discipline can reach is almost unimaginable. Here is a list of the things given in this passage in Lev. 26, adding verses 22-39:

- Sudden terror.
- Wasting diseases.
- Fever that destroys sight.
- Financial collapse.
- Defeat by your enemies.
- Domination by those who hate you.
- Absence of sustenance (e.g., rain).
- Wild animals attacking and destroying the children and the cattle.
- Dwindling population.
- Swords coming against you (being conquered by other nations).
- Plague.
- No food.
- Digestion problems.



- Starvation leading to cannibalism of even family members.
- Dead bodies piling up on images of idols.
- Cities being destroyed.
- The land becoming wasted and desolate.
- No escape.
- Crazy fear, fleeing the slightest noise.
- Maniacal flight from imagined dangers.

This is unthinkable, unless you are actually living it, and then you know it is real. Hard-hearted or hard-headed believers will wait until these come before they turn around and return to fellowship and prayer and study and growth. There is resolution from discipline, however, and that is what we see in the next three verses (Lev. 26:40-42), as follows:

But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

When confession is given, discipline will stop. The suffering may continue for training purposes, but we will have the grace of God beneath us to uphold us through the rigors of “tests and trials”. The suffering of discipline can be intolerable and lonely, and may cause us to wonder, “What is God doing?” But now we will know.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What happens when we sin and do not confess?

**Question 2.** What happens if we do not respond to God’s methods to bring us back to Him?

**Question 3.** What is the ultimate form of discipline?

**Question 4.** How can we get discipline to stop?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Heb. 12:7-11**—Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No dis-

cipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

## ***Remember***

Suffering for discipline can be intensely painful and unrelenting. And it is unnecessary, because of the grace methods God has given us to avoid it. At some point in our discipline, our pride will be broken, and we will return to fellowship with our God.

## ***D. Commands Regarding the Spirit***

The commands we will see in this section are those telling us what *not* to do regarding the Holy Spirit. In the next section, we will see what we *should* do. What strikes us here is that it is a wonderful thing to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because we can *access* Him. The bothersome thing is that we don't do it more consistently. We have our own agendas, which often omit God and God's will and plan. We go our own way, and trust ourselves to build and live our own lives. This is not the best way to live, as we have seen, which is why God has given us specific commands to avoid this pattern.

We set the stage for these commands by quoting Eph. 4:22-32 in its entirety, as follows:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin". Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

We see "good" and "bad" in this passage. When the "bad" is present, the Holy Spirit is grieved, so the command is given for us NOT to grieve Him, which means the bad must be removed. When we follow the steps God has given us for avoiding and removing sin, we will be able to see the "good" in our lives, which is encompassed in the phrase, "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In the passage just quoted, we see a string of standards, as follows:

- Put off falsehood.

- Speak truthfully to your Christian brothers.
- Do not sin as the result of anger.
- Do not give the devil a foothold.
- Do not steal, but rather work hard.
- Avoid unwholesome talk.
- Let talk be for the purpose of building each other up.
- Get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger, as well as brawling, slander, and malice.
- Be kind and compassionate and forgiving.

We mentioned one of the standards that is embedded in the middle of these other standards, and it is the most important one in the set. We find this standard in verse 30, which says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” When we violate ANY of God’s standards, exemplified by the list above, we “grieve” the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit is grieved, He is set aside, or alienated. He doesn’t leave; His power is just cut off from us.

The moment of “grieving” the Spirit is the moment we step out of fellowship, due to sin. The command not to grieve is equivalent to the command not to allow sin to hang out in our hearts. Sin must be thrown out by confession, whenever it sneaks in, and later in our studies—when we learn to walk in the Spirit—we will see how faith can check it at the door.

Whenever the Spirit is grieved, He is also “quenched”, which is a way of saying the spiritual fire is doused. HIS fire never dies, of course, but the flow of that power into our lives most certainly does, when He is grieved or quenched. Sin short-circuits the power of the Spirit, as does legalism.

We see the command for not “quenching”, the power of the Holy Spirit in 1 Thess. 5:19, which says, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.” This command—like the command not to “grieve” the Spirit—is surrounded by standards for living. To meet these standards, we must not grieve or quench the Spirit, but must, instead, fulfill 1 Thess. 5:23-24 (seen in the last section), which calls for us to be “cleansed”. We repeat the quotation of this passage, as follows:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

God is the one who cleanses us and makes us blameless. He does this when we submit our hearts to Him for cleansing. God, after all, loves a clean heart, as we see in Prov. 11:20, which says, “The Lord detests men of perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.” Sin alienates God and cuts off His power within us. By confessing to get the power back on, followed by praying, studying, and building our faith, we can spend more time walking in the “light” (implying God’s “power”) and we can live in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

If we do not live in the Spirit, however, the picture of what happens is now complete, as summarized in the following:

- The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched.
- The sinful nature takes over.
- The control and the fruit of the Spirit are lost for the duration of our carnality.
- Our prayers are not heard. (Ps. 66:18)
- We cannot learn Scripture. (1 Cor. 2:14)

To avoid these, we do not have to be perfect; we just have to be “covered”. It is not our perfection that pleases God; it is our receipt of GRACE and FORGIVENESS! When we are forgiven, we are “blameless”, and when we learn to “walk” in that condition, we will catapult toward maturity, and see marvelous things emanating from the life of the Spirit within us.

We are to be kept “clean”, or “sanctified”, or “holy”, by using God’s *grace assets*. We are told to be “holy”, because God is holy. Peter gives the command for this holiness in 1 Pet. 1:14-16, which says this:

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Peter’s call for us to be “holy” is not a reference to *making our own conduct holy*, but to our *being in a state of holiness...a state of being clean when the conduct occurs*. As we do things, or when we do things, we should BE “holy”...or clean! In other words, we are to do *everything* in fellowship...otherwise, what we do may represent an effort to “act” holy, but it will be just that: an *act*.

But when we are clean, the Holy Spirit will not be grieved or quenched...God will delight in us, and we will be “holy”.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What are the two major commands regarding the Holy Spirit, as seen in this section?

**Question 2.** What are the results of stepping away from God?

**Question 3.** What must our condition (or “state”) be for us to avoid stopping the flow of the Spirit’s power?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Ps. 66:18**—If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

**1 Cor. 2:14**—The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

**Gal. 5:19-21a; 22-23a**—The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish

ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

## ***Remember***

Sin or functioning under Law causes the Spirit to be “grieved” or “quenched”. When this happens, we are no longer tapped into our sole source for spiritual power. Only forgiveness can re-establish contact.

## ***E. The Filling of the Spirit***

The next command we want to review regarding the Holy Spirit is this: We must be “filled with the Spirit”. This is followed by another, which is that we should “walk by the Spirit”. We will see the difference between these two in the next section, when we will examine closely what it means to “walk” in the Spirit. But first, we will flesh out what we have already learned about the “filling” of the Spirit.

There is a great deal of confusion concerning the filling of the Holy Spirit, most of which comes from our tendency to turn our attention to ourselves, rather than to God. When we are focused on ourselves, we emphasize our own experience, rather than God’s Word, as a central criteria for truth. We also use “experience” to demonstrate God’s presence. This can lead us away from the Truth.

There were conditions and practices that existed during the earthly ministry of Christ, and while the early church was forming, that do not bear the same weight now as they did back then. The reason is that we have the completed Word of God now, and do not need the direct-experience interaction with God that was formerly conducted. I am not saying we will not have powerful, meaningful, and life-changing experiences when we are seeking God. I am saying that these will be an OUTCOME of spiritual growth, and not a means to it. This also does not negate that God’s “training” brings experiences to us, from which we can learn. But these “follow”, rather than “define” God’s Word.

We have to be careful about this, as we do NOT deny that God can deal with us through miracles, prophecy, healing, foreign tongues, and so on, as He chooses, and can use these whenever and however He wants. But we believe that the availability of God’s completed Word now *downplays* the need for these on a wide-spread, ongoing basis. Some groups present “tongues” as a sign of the “filling of the Spirit”. This may be true, at times, but it misses the point for being filled. The point of being filled is to make our gifts (of all kinds) operational, to make our joy “complete”, to generate the love and character of Christ, and to glorify God.

And the filling of the Spirit may or may not be accompanied by emotions. Emotions are appropriate, but are not the “evidence” for the filling. We might be “filled” or “unfilled” without feeling anything. Furthermore, the filling of the Spirit cannot be seen as a once-for-all event...it is something that is intermittent, depending on our being “cleansed”. That should be clear by now. The filling of the Spirit gives spiritual empowerment for living, the foundation for which is **being purged from sin**.

The command to be filled with the Spirit is found in Eph. 5:18, which says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” When we are filled with wine, *it* controls us; and—by the same token—when we are filled with the Spirit, *He* controls us. Sin removes that control in an instant, so we must give due diligence to using strategies for retaining that filling, in order to enjoy the good effects of a Spirit-filled life. Greed, lust, envy, hatred, anger, pride, and addictions...if these control us, the control of the Spirit cannot take place. He will not share the helm. He will be in charge, or He will not be working on our behalf.

We understand that our issue is not to get the Holy Spirit *into* us, but to put what is *already inside of us* in charge. It is vital that we follow the correct way to acquire and sustain the filling of the Spirit. Only then will we see the righteousness of God produced. Gal. 5:5-6 describes this truth for us:

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

The thing that matters is an ongoing faith in God, that works through “love” (meaning “fellowship”). When faith and fellowship are present, the “righteousness” that comes “through the Spirit” can be anticipated. It’s either that, or we will muddle through, trying to reach our goals by “human effort”. (Gal. 3:3) The life of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit are products of our special communion and fellowship with God, always pending our getting cleaned up. When we are clean, we will be filled with the Spirit. And when we are filled with the Spirit, learning to perpetuate that filling by “walking in the Spirit”, we will produce the righteousness of God.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Instead of being drunk with wine, we are to be \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Question 2.** What terminates the control of the Holy Spirit?

**Question 3.** Righteousness comes from what two conditions...which are said to “really matter”?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Gal. 4:19**—My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you....

**Gal. 2:20**—I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

## *Remember*

The filling of the Spirit is that moment when we confess and return to fellowship with God. This fellowship is the basis for all our production and growth, and is the primary condition for our spirituality.

## *F. Faith Keeps us Connected with the Spirit*

Spirituality is a connection with the power of the Holy Spirit of the true and living God. This connection is seen as the control of the Spirit, which occurs whenever we “qualify” for His “filling”, based on our being purified from all sin.

We have identified confession of our sins as the means for achieving purity, and now we want to get a closer look at the role of faith in the process of keeping us pure, enabling us to walk by means of the Spirit’s power.

After we are in fellowship, faith is the condition in our hearts that keep us connected. Stronger faith means a longer connection, because sin will be increasingly held at bay. The more faith we have, the greater resistance we will have to sin, which keeps us pure and sustains our fellowship. Once we are in fellowship, everything revolves around the status of our faith. Immature believers have a weak faith, and will quickly acquiesce to evil forces and succumb to sin’s power. Mature believers know where the sin-mines are buried, and will exhibit stronger faith, which will cause preoccupation with Christ, and crowd out sin...or serve as a sin-repellent.

When the faith-level drops, our attention shifts away from God, which leaves us open to attacks from the sinful nature, the world, and Satan. Loss of fellowship *begins* with a slip in our faith. The result of flagging faith is sin or self-righteousness. We seek to please ourselves (seek “pleasure”) and/or walk the path of pride. A drop in the trust meter means that we are headed quickly into carnality, which constitutes slavery to evil. Stronger faith can prevent this, which is why the cultivation of faith and growth are so important.

Faith, then, sustains fellowship...and this faith is directed toward our God. Rom. 15:3 says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace [shorthand for “fellowship”] **as you trust in him**, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Emphasis mine.) For as long as we are “trusting in Him”, we will be filled with joy and peace...in other words, we will stay in fellowship...and this will strengthen us “by the power of the Holy Spirit”.

Confession is the conveyor that takes us into the place of fellowship, and faith is the cord that holds

us there. As we mature, the cord of faith gets stronger, and the tie becomes more secure. Rom. 1:17 says, “For in the gospel a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Every step we take should be by faith...every thought, every incident, every decision, and every encounter. Every moment of our lives should be executed by faith in Jesus Christ. We “walk” by trusting in God and His Word...every second of every day.

We are moving into the “walk by the Spirit”, which this present “part” explores. We have seen the “filling of the Spirit”, and are beginning a look at the “walk in the Spirit”. Here is the basic difference between these two:

1. The “filling of the Spirit” is the instantaneous occurrence of restoration of fellowship through the honest confession of our sins. We move from control of the flesh to the control of the Spirit, when this happens.
2. “Walking in the Spirit” is the condition of being under the influence of the Spirit...in an *ongoing* state of being “filled by the Spirit”. In this state, sin is under control and the fruit of the Spirit is produced. Our “walk” is sustained by faith, and the consistency of our walk depends on the strength of our faith.

We confess our sins to get them forgiven and restore the influence of the Spirit in our lives. Then we retain that influence by trusting in the resurrection power of Christ, the provision of the Father, and the enablement of the Holy Spirit. In other words, our walk in the Spirit is sustained by FAITH! And please note: Babies “crawl”, while growing believers “walk”. Walking is *moving forward*, and the speed of progress depends on the potency of our faith. When we reach maturity, we may do what Paul did and “run”, as in “running the race” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Behind faith are all the techniques we have studied for getting closer to God, and living in His power. These are the secrets God has shared with us, and the good news for believers. God offers transportation through this “walk”; or we can jump off His train and strike out on our own...alone.

Confession of our sins, prayer, study of Scripture, and building our faith through learning and training...these are the primary techniques around which a myriad of “sub-techniques” orbit. 2 Pet. 1:3 assures us, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” We need ALL the divine tools to get the job done; we need all the divine weapons to fight the battle; we need God’s divine “everything” to support our “lives and godliness”.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** How does faith keep us in fellowship?

**Question 2.** How does faith grow?

**Question 3.** What is the result of stronger faith, related to our walk in the Spirit?



## Other Scriptures

**2Tim. 4:7**—I have fought the good fight, I have finished [running] the race, I have kept the faith.

**2 Cor. 1:24**—Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy [fellowship], because it is by faith you stand firm [walk by faith...by the Spirit].

### Remember

Once again, being spotless before God is the key to our fellowship and walk with God. Confession is the cleansing agent, and faith is the Teflon coating that keeps us clean. The degree to which we are “covered” by faith is the extent to which we will “walk” in the Spirit.

## G. Verses on Faith and Spirituality

Here are some choice scriptures dealing with the role of faith in spirituality. These accommodate themselves well to the previous section on the connection of faith and our “walk”, as follow:

- Eph. 6:23—“Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Love and faith often appear together in Scripture, which is a link not unintended, I believe. Love equals spirituality, as we have seen, and spirituality produces love. Faith supports spirituality, and therefore underpins love, as well.
- 2 Cor. 1:24—“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.” We see “fellowship” in two terms here: “joy”, and “stand firm”. We have seen before that joy is a signal for fellowship, and “stand firm” means to stay in one place, or “abide”. This shows the process of moving into fellowship, and staying there...or *being filled* with the Spirit and then *walking* in the Spirit. And what keeps you there? Faith.
- 1 Tim. 1:19—“...holding on to faith and a good conscience.” *Holding on to faith* is sustaining our trust in God and His Word, as we *hold on to a good (clear) conscience* through confession.
- Eph. 3:16-17a—“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” We are strengthened by the power of the Spirit when He fills us, and then we maintain that connection for as long as Christ is “at home and in charge”, because of our ongoing faith.
- Rom. 15:13—“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” God fills us with “joy and peace” when He fills us with His Spirit, and the next step is for us to go on “trusting in Him”, so that the power of the Spirit can produce His fruit in us, as we are

“walking in Him”.

There are no questions, extra verses, or comments for this section.

## *H. The Walk in the Spirit*

Gal. 5:16 says, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Living by the Spirit is a continual walk whereby the Spirit guides us as we move through life. Gal. 5:25 adds, “Since we live in the Spirit [we are alive in Him as a result of salvation] let us keep in step with [NIV alternate translation gives “walk with”] the Spirit.” To walk with the spirit is to “march” in step with the Spirit, taking each step on His cadence, and in His power.

We saw in the last two sections that walking in the Spirit requires faith to sustain it. Someone said that walking is constantly falling and catching ourselves. We lean forward and are momentarily out of balance, so we catch ourselves by stepping out. Then we lean forward again—fall forward—and catch ourselves. Repeated over and over, this becomes walking. This is similar to our spiritual walk, except that we do not catch ourselves...we trust the Spirit to catch us and keep us from falling on our face. Faith in His ability to enable our walk will keep us moving forward...seeking, growing, producing.

It is reassuring to know that, when we are “walking in the Spirit”, we will have power over the sinful nature. This is where the victory is won, made possible by a faith that is God-focused and growing. Rom. 8:5 distinguishes walking in the Spirit and walking in the sinful nature, as follows: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” Rom. 8:13 follows with this: “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die [a temporal spiritual death], but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live [be controlled by the Life of the Spirit within you]. The thing that is “put to death”...that is taken to the ground...is the status and practice of producing “misdeeds”. Sins get punched in the mouth when we are walking in the Spirit. They are decimated. This is because faith is our “shield” (Eph. 6:16a), and it will protect us from evil and the “evil one”. But faith is not self-fed or self-strengthened...it is the result of using all the grace methods: confession, prayer, study, and so on. If we will give attention to these, which point us to God, our faith will grow, and **sin will diminish!** This is the way to power; this is the *only* way to righteousness and godly love.

As long as Satan can prevent us from using grace techniques, and learning the promises, he will be able to blur the lines between carnality and spirituality, and will keep us from tapping into God’s power. The power is what we need to succeed. It is what we hold to grow bold. It gives the walk to our talk. And the power goes to those who are humble enough and trusting enough to give their weak and unsteady hearts to a forgiving and strengthening God. The losers win; those in last place win the race and get the trophy, because they cheated...they caught a ride.

1 Cor. 4:20 confirms the place of power, saying, “For the kingdom is not a matter of talk, but of power.” Rom. 14:17 adds, “For the kingdom of God [the expression of His power] is not a matter of

eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit [i.e., fellowship]”. 1 Cor. 1:18 closes the argument with this: “For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Believers have the power of God available to them, and when they walk in the Spirit, they will be surrounded by that power.

Walking by the Spirit has a given *sequence*, and specific *consequences*. The following gives the sequence...and the consequence:

1. At some point, a believer sins, putting the sinful nature in charge.
2. The sinful nature produces sin, legalism, and/or self-dependence in the life of the believer.
3. Divine discipline kicks in and—sooner or later—the soul becomes anguished. This will go on until sins are confessed.
4. Upon confession of sins, the control of the Holy Spirit is restored, but the sinful nature is likely enraged at the loss of his control.
5. The sinful nature teams up with Satan and the world, to plot the overthrow of the Spirit’s control and return the believer to sin. The believer can be drawn into sin, in which case the power of the Spirit is once again neutralized. This entire process may take place in a nanosecond, but the effects may be lasting, depending on what happens next.
6. The believer can confess his sins again, at which time the Spirit will move back into authority over the heart of the believer.
7. While the believer is filled with the Spirit, he is able to grow spiritually, a process made possible by the intake of Scripture and the endurance of tests brought on or allowed by God.
8. Learning and believing Scripture (while applying *all* the techniques) builds the believer’s faith, which sustains a walk in the Spirit for increasingly-longer periods of time.
9. The maturity of the believer continues to build, as faith grows.
10. While faith is growing, the Holy Spirit produces righteousness and love through the believer, which reflects the light and character of Christ...and generates the fruit of the Spirit.
11. Rewards are accumulated in heaven for acts done in the power of the Spirit.
12. The life of the believer glorifies Christ, satisfies the Holy Spirit, and honors the Father.

This is the path we are intended to walk. This is the “walk in the Spirit”.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What gives us victory over sin?

**Question 2.** Why won’t this work with immature believers?

**Question 3.** Learning and believing Scripture will build a believer's \_\_\_\_\_, which will sustain a \_\_\_\_\_ in the Spirit.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Cor. 6:19-20**—Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

**Gal. 5:5**—By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

**Heb. 10:22**—...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

**Rom. 8:4**—...in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

**2 Cor. 1:24**—Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

## *Remember*

The filling of the Spirit is a wonderful thing, but it can be fleeting, until it becomes a “walk”, which is a “way of life”. When our faith becomes strong by our consistently using all the grace assets, we will be walking in the Spirit, which is the only way to fly.

## Chapter 28

# Things Done in the Spirit

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Able to Produce in Fellowship*
- B. Able to Fight Sin*
- C. Able to Use our Gifts*
- D. Able to Bear the Fruit of the Spirit*
- E. Spirituality Flow Chart and Confession Verses*

### *A. Able to Produce in Fellowship*

This chapter on what can be “done” in the Spirit does not present an exhaustive examination of all the things that have been, can be, and will be accomplished by believers operating in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is sufficient, we believe, for you to get this point: The Holy Spirit can do amazing things in the believer who is seeking God and following God’s procedures for growth and spirituality.

In a previous book, called *Studies on Living Within God’s Standards*, we provided a study of the book of First John, and one on the book of James. What we were surprised to discover is that both of these books deal primarily with “fellowship”. This section gives a glimpse of our study in 1st John, which will serve to illustrate the things we are talking about in this chapter.

The first epistle of John was written to believers to strengthen them and encourage them by helping them deal with sin in their lives. We studied 1 John 1 earlier in this book under the part, “Dealing with Sin”. John said a lot about sin, and drew a sharp contrast between “sin”...and “fellowship”. Sin is on one side of the coin; fellowship is on the other. Over and over, John shows how sin does not fit into our relationship with God, and states plainly that he is writing his epistle so that his readers will avoid sinning. In 1 John 2:1a, he says, “My dear children, I write this to you

so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

We see in this verse that sin *does exist* in believers, and we also see that God has provided a way for us to deal with it...without removing our salvation. Our part is confession (1 John 1:9); God’s part is forgiveness (also 1 John 1:9), through the efficacious *work* of Jesus Christ...the basis for our defense before the Father.

John makes many references to sin in this epistle. Here are a few of them, given as summaries, rather than as quotes:

- 1:7—Christ purifies us from all sin.
- 1:8—We can’t claim to be without sin.
- 1:10—We can’t claim that we have not sinned.
- 2:1—John was writing so his readers would not sin.
- 2:2—Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.
- 3:4—Everyone who sins breaks the “Law”.
- 3:5—Christ came to take away our sins.
- 3:5—No one in fellowship will keep on sinning.
- 3:8—The believer who sins is, at that time, “of the devil”.

John proposes that we deal with sin...not to excuse it or overlook it, but to *see it and remove it*, both as a **record**...and as a **practice**. The “record” is cleared with confession; the “practice” is corrected through a walk in the Spirit. The idea is to GET SIN OUT and to KEEP IT OUT!

We want to see two lists from the *Standards* book, one showing the signs for carnality; the other reflecting the indicators for fellowship. John gives us these to show the contrast between the two conditions, and to encourage us to embrace the *solution* for sin that he gave in his first epistle (1 John 1:9). Here are the indicators for a believer in “carnality”, or the condition of being out of fellowship:

1. Walks in darkness. (1:6)
2. Will not live by the truth. (1:6)
3. Is self deceptive and devoid of truth (1:8)
4. God’s Word has no place. (1:10)
5. Will not do what God commands. (2:4)
6. Will not walk as Jesus did (2:6)
7. Operating in darkness. (2:9)
8. Hates his brother. (2:11)
9. Does not know where he is going, because of the darkness. (2:11)
10. Will be ashamed when Jesus comes. (2:28)
11. Void of divine righteousness. (2:29)
12. Keeps on sinning. (3:6)
13. Serving the devil. (3:8)

14. Will continue to sin. (3:9)
15. Does not do what is right. (3:10)
16. Does not love his brother. (3:10)
17. Remains in (spiritual) death. (3:14)
18. Is a murderer. (3:15)
19. Has no pity for others. (3:17)
20. Does not obey and does not please God. (3:22)
21. Prayers are not answered. (3:22)
22. Does not love or know God. (4:7)
23. Does not know God, because he hates his brother. (4:20)
24. Does not love God or obey His commands. (5:2)
25. Does not overcome the world. (5:4)
26. Faith is insufficient to overcome the world. (5:4)
27. Continues to sin. (5:18)
28. May be overcome by idols. (5:21)

This is the tragic condition of life apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, which is clearly contrasted with the believer who walks in the Spirit. John gives the indicators for this walk in the following citations from 1st John. The believer in fellowship will...

1. Obey his commands and His Word. (2:4-6)
2. Have God's love perfected within him. (2:5)
3. Walk as Jesus did. (2:6)
4. Love the brothers. (2:9-10)
5. Be confident and unashamed at His coming. (2:28)
6. Do what is right. (2:29)
7. Have hope (faith) that we will be like Him. (3:3)
8. Stop sinning. (3:6)
9. Pass from (spiritual) death to (spiritual) life, or carnality to fellowship. (3:14)
10. Loving to the point that we are willing to lay down our lives. (3:16)
11. Have pity; also, love with actions and in truth. (3:17-18)
12. Hearts do not condemn us, so we have confidence before God. (3:21)
13. Receive what we ask for. (3:22)
14. Live in Him. (3:24)
15. Overcome false prophets and spirit of antichrist. (4:4)
16. Love one another. (4:7-8)
17. Love is made complete in us. (4:17)
18. Love God. (4:21 and 5:3)
19. Carry out His commands. (5:3)
20. Overcome the world. (5:4)
21. Confident that God hears us. (5:14)
22. Get what we ask for. (5:15)

- 23. Will not continue to sin. (5:18)
- 24. Be kept safe from the evil one. (5:18)
- 25. Can overcome idols (5:21)

If Satan can keep us focused on our own abilities, problems, achievements, pleasures, and possessions, he will keep us in a weakened position and restrain us in the grip of our own carnality. But when we learn to walk in the Spirit, Satan will be overpowered.

All service for God...all “genuine” good...comes from fellowship with God. Fellowship perpetuated becomes a “walk”. A walk perpetuated becomes a life of surrender and blessing (Part Seven). To engage in pure service for the true and living God, we must follow His plan for growth and empowerment, which will open up avenues for preservice preparation and inservice production, as laid out in 1 Pet. 4:7-12, quoted under “Other Scriptures” below, and summarized here:

- Being clear-minded and self-controlled.
- Praying in fellowship.
- Loving each other deeply.
- Offering hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- Each one using his gift to serve others, administering grace in its various forms.
- Speaking as though the words come from God.
- **Serving in God’s strength.**
- Directing all things toward praise and glory of Jesus Christ.

To produce righteousness and provide true and meaningful service to the God we seek, we must live in the light of His power...that limitless source of energy through which all things are possible.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What was John’s purpose in writing 1st John?

**Question 2.** What is our part in dealing with sin? What is God’s part?

**Question 3.** Sin needs to be removed, both as a \_\_\_\_\_ and as a \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Pet. 4:7-12**—The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.



## ***Remember***

The first epistle of John is a veritable primer on sin and the conditions that promote it, as opposed to those that remove and defeat it. John also gives indicators for being in-fellowship or out-of-fellowship. In this letter, John gives the first and most important method for dealing with sin, and tells us how to stay in fellowship...through CONFESSION.

## ***B. Able to Fight Sin***

When Christ completed His work on the cross, He said, “It is finished.” He was declaring that the payment had been made in full for our sins, so He now holds the contract for the souls of all of those who would accept Him by faith. The contract was paid for, and it is now being executed as part of God’s plan. A primary feature of the contract is that the sins of all who believe will be removed...as far as the east is from the west. But we have a seeming paradox, because—even though sins have been removed—they still exist.

Sin will ultimately be non-existent, when we get our perfect bodies at resurrection. But while we are still in our current bodies, sin still exists in our hearts and lives. Meanwhile, God’s *eternal view* of our position in Christ is that we are *righteous*, because all sins have been covered by the blood of Christ. But here we are, in an earth-bound position, with sin still *in* us and coming out *from* us. This is why God must provide for us in this sphere we call *time*, where we will be haunted by the Law, lured by the world, attacked by Satan, and disrupted by our own sinful natures. We cannot face all these foes and traps without divine intervention, which comes to us in the form of GRACE. Grace is available, if we choose to access it. (Please ALLOW CONSIDERABLE REPETITION to establish these principles!)

If we do not access the assets of grace, we will be defeated by our spiritual enemies, who all converge at a point called SIN. Sin encapsulates all acts and thoughts that lead us away from God, and that decimate our trust in Him. God has prepared a defense against sin, in the form of techniques, but we have to take them seriously...as though our lives depend on them. In a temporal, spiritual sense, they actually do.

Because we are basically evil in our nature, anything good will come through God, and not from us, which means that our connection with His power must be solid for Him to work through us. Anything we do IN FELLOWSHIP will be good; anything we do OUT OF FELLOWSHIP will be bad. It is the condition we are in that determines the worth of an action, not the worth of the action itself. Anything done under the control of the sinful nature CANNOT BE RIGHT! In other words, it is sin.

“Sin” is the issue, and “control” is the outcome. By this, we mean that the presence or absence of sin determines what controls us. When we sin, the sinful nature controls, and more sin is produced. When we confess, sin is erased, and then the Spirit will take control to curb slippage back into sin.

We want to see the things that help...or hurt...our quest to conquer sin. We have determined that keeping the Law is of no benefit in beating sin. Gal. 3:10-12 reminds us of this, as follows:

All who rely on the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”

Trying to live the Christian life by rule-keeping is choosing a LIFE under the law, and we have seen where that leads. The Law is no help with sin, and is really a place for sin to hide. A life in the Spirit, on the other hand, will provide the means for protecting us from sin. Gal. 5:16 says, “So I say, live by the [power of] the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Rom. 6:11-12 adds this: “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.” The life we have in Christ Jesus enables us to refuse the reign of sin in our lives. Refusing sin is the objective; the Spirit of Christ is the means.

Col. 3:1-16 gives a call for us to put to death everything belonging to the sinful nature. Then verse 17 commands, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” We have seen that doing anything in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do it in HIS POWER. When we act in His power, it is because He controls us. And when He controls us, His power is directed against sin.

So it is the power of the Spirit of Christ that enables the defeat of sin. But the flow of that power, and the grace it delivers, is dependent on our use of the techniques. Once confession is accomplished, we must use the other techniques to fully engage divine assets. We will review the “other” techniques here, in light of their contribution to the process of beating sin. These are: studying the Word, prayer, and trusting God.

**Study of the Word Strengthens Against Sin.** Here are some comments, with verses that back them up. These reiterate the place of study in fortifying us against sin:

- Prov. 6:20-24—“My Son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. Bind them upon your heart, fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life. Keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.” Knowledge of the Word increases resistance to sin.
- Ps. 119:165—“Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.” When we learn and treasure God’s Word, it will keep us upright when potholes appear, and as we walk through the minefields.
- Prov. 2:16—“It [wisdom] will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words....”
- 2 Pet. 1:8—“For if you possess these qualities [signifying maturity] in increasing meas-

ure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Growth through knowledge of the Word prevents the subterfuge of sin.

- 2 Pet. 1:2-3—“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” Knowledge shows us how to access the power that can equip us for a life of good and godliness.
- Eph. 1:17—“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” As we acquire the Spirit of wisdom, we know where the springs in the desert are hidden, where the energy is stored...“his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.” That is our protection from sin.
- 1 Cor. 10:3-4—“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” If we are going to destroy the concerted strength of evil to attack us, we must have “divine power”.
- Ps. 119:9-11— “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” The Word stored in our hearts as wisdom deters sin.
- Phil. 1:9-10—“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory of God.” Being blameless and producing fruit comes with “knowledge and depth of insight”, because it enables us to “discern what is best”.

**Prayer is a Plea for Divine Assistance Against Sin.** Heb. 4:16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” This is a time of “petitioning”, or asking for help from God, based on our obtaining “mercy” through forgiveness at the time of confession. One of the things we can ask for is help in overcoming sin. The most direct request we can make in asking for help with sin is to beseech God for “protection” from the “evil one”. Jesus even included this in the prayer He taught His disciples, which says, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13).

Ps. 119:133 is a prayer from David asking for help with sin: “Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.” Eph. 6:10 tells us to don God’s armor to guard against sin. Verse 11*b* says, “Put on the whole armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Prayer is a crucial piece of that armor, which is described in verse 18*a*, which says, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Praying in the Spirit is part of our equipment for halting sin.

There are other passages that verify the importance of prayer in seeking strength to deal with sin. Ps. 32:6-7 is one of these. This passage says this:

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him [the godly person who prays]. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble [evil] and surround me with songs of deliverance.

When we are in fellowship and pray for deliverance from sin, God will hold back the “mighty waters” that come against us. Apart from that connection, we will be helpless against the tsunami.

**Faith Helps us Defeat Sin.** This is the most crucial weapon in our arsenal; faith is the greatest shield against sin. With faith, no sin will be allowed, because fellowship will be evident. Without faith, everything we do is sin. As we have clearly established in previous studies, faith is the strongest deterrent we have against evil. We will give a few verses on this to remind us that faith is a key feature in our spiritual walk, as follows:

- 2 Cor. 5:7 says, “We live by faith, not by sight.” The carnal man sees with his eyes and sees the world; the spiritual man sees with his spirit and sees God’s truth.
- Gal. 5:5 gives us this: “But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope”, and verse 6b adds, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Through the power of the Holy Spirit, true righteousness is produced, the sinful nature is kept in check, and sin is stymied.
- Heb. 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Faith produces righteousness and pleases God, because it keeps our spiritual focus on Him. Where righteousness is found, sin will be absent.

We cannot see faith, or feel it, but—if we follow God’s road-map for growth—our faith will increase, our God-consciousness will surge, and our strength against sin will intensify. Just like the growth of corn in the field, it will just happen.

Faith is the consummate outcropping of grace assets, and the key condition for our spiritual walk. Faith is at the top of the hierarchy of all of the techniques, because it is the ultimate outcome of their use. We could wax endlessly repetitive regarding the place of faith, just as we have about the place of God’s power in our walk. But we must somehow get the message across as to how all these tie together, and we must make sure we have established the essential elements of truth about both grace techniques and the adversary of grace: sin.

We must have correct understanding...and complete understanding...of the place of God’s methods in our growth, our joy, our service, our closer walk with God, and our knowing what God means when He says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). But He has shown it to us now in His Word...that is, the things He has prepared for us...to give us the “abundant life”, and to enable us to live in a way that magnifies Him.

The greatest impediment to doing this, and a primary reason for seeking divine help, is sin. Sin

must go, and it will take every ounce of faith we can ever acquire to stop it. God is ready to give us help, when we are willing to receive it.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What techniques are useful for fighting sin?

**Question 2.** What is the most crucial weapon in our arsenal to create resistance to sin?

**Question 3.** True or false: In our time, defeating sin is a never-ending battle.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Cor. 10:13**—No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

**Prov. 5:1-5**—My Son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall....

## *Remember*

God has provided divine assistance in our battle with sin. We must not refuse the help.

## *C. Able to Use our Gifts*

Gifts are provided for the purpose of edification. Edification is about building up fellow believers, and—ultimately—the entire church. Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit so that we can strengthen each other in faith and fellowship. Gifts can come at salvation, or perhaps later, when we reach maturity. One thing is certain, and that is that our gifts will not be operational until we reach a sufficient level of maturity, and—of course—are staying in fellowship.

Gifts prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Eph. 4:12 says gifts were given "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...." We work toward maturity, so that we can help others mature, so—in turn—the work of the body of Christ can be done.

The operation of our gifts is important, but is downplayed in most churches. For individual believers...and the whole church...to be effective, gifts must be fully serviceable. When a church is focused on the Word, learning to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, and functioning in an atmosphere of divine love, the possibilities for productivity are limitless. The mutual strengthening that can occur in such an environment is thrilling to contemplate. Here are some verses describing the process for achieving this:

- Eph. 4:16—From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting

ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- Col. 2:6-7—So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught....
- I Thess. 5:11—Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
- Jude 1:20-21—But you, dear friends, build yourselves [each other] up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
- Rom. 14:19—Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.
- Rom. 15:2—Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Gifts are for building each other up. The more maturity we see among believers, the greater the edification will be, and the more effective the work of the church will become.

When God gives gifts...those special spiritual functions designed so that God can operate in special ways to complete His purposes...we are speaking of something entirely dependent on God's power and direction. His divine will targets individual believers as participants and beneficiaries of these gifts. Gifts are opportunities to have God fulfill *in* us what He has determined to complete *through* us.

Each believer has a contribution to make to the group, by God's grace and through His strength, so that *all* believers benefit. Paul told the Corinthians that they were "not lacking in any gift" (1 Cor. 1:7). God provides for the needs of every believer, and many times, He uses other believers to do it.

Gifts should be used in *God's strength*. 1 Pet. 1:11 admonishes us with this: "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." Gifts exercised outside God's power are simply "talents", and represent OUR efforts to do God's work. To do God's work, *God's way*, God has to do the work.

The gifts themselves are too numerous to list. We can identify here some of the gifts shown in Scripture, but there are, of course, many other important functions not listed. We get from Eph 4:11, Rom. 12:4-6, and 1 Cor. 12:4-30, the following gifts:

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Teachers
- Evangelists
- Workers of miracles
- Healing
- Administration
- Speaking in different languages
- Interpreting languages

- Getting messages of wisdom
- Getting messages of knowledge
- Having faith
- Showing mercy (kindness)
- Providing service
- Helping
- Leading
- Giving
- Displaying hospitality
- Possessing miraculous powers
- Distinguishing between spirits

As we said, there are still others listed elsewhere in Scripture, such as understanding, missionary work, and voluntary poverty. Some of the gifts are more desirable than others, and some may not be operational today, because they were intended to be used only during the formation of the church and the completion of God's Word. (This is a topic for another discussion, not to be pursued here, but one that is taken up in previous books.) But ALL GIFTS ARE IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL! Our job is to locate our own gifts, and to embrace them with enthusiasm...and without pride or the motivation of self-aggrandizement...and without competition, comparisons, and jealousy. This kind of spiritual composure will come with maturity.

Eph. 4:1 tells us to “walk worthy of the calling in which you were called.” (Endnote 12) For us to be “worthy” is for us to be walking in the Spirit, which is the product of fellowship coupled with mature faith. This will make us ready for service, which Paul was anxious to see in the believers he served. In 2 Thess. 1:11-12, he said the following:

...we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was praying that they would fulfill God's will in their lives through mature faith, and that they would allow God to complete the purposes He had assigned to them. The outcome of this was—and is—that Jesus Christ would be glorified *in them*. Notice that this is to be done “by his power”. This is reminiscent of Phil. 2:13, which says, “...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” If you want to see God at work, look at a *mature believer in fellowship*.

God gives us gifts to allow us the privilege of having Him work in us to do the things He wants done in our lives and in the church. He can do His work without us, but He gives us a chance to tag along as He does the work. I am reminded of a child that goes to work with his father, where he is dazzled and amazed at the things his father can do. We have to stay out of the way, but God lets us come along, and the joy and privilege of being with Him at His work are boundless.

As we seek to be worthy of our calling, we are told in 2 Tim. 1:6 to “fan into flame the gift of God”. This is another call for us to mature, so our gifts can be fully operational. This is embellished in 1 Tim. 4:13-16, where Paul admonishes Timothy, as follows:

Until I come, attend to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not be neglectful of the gift in you, which was given to you through prophecy, with laying on of the hands of the elderhood: Meditate on these things; be in these things in order that your progress may be plain to all. Hold on to your self and to the teaching; continue in them; for doing this, you will both deliver yourself and those hearing you. (Endnote 13)

This applies to all of us. The essence of not neglecting one’s gift, or “fanning the flame” of a gift is placing ourselves passionately into the study of God’s Word. We cannot say we believe God or live for God, or serve God, or want more of God, IF WE DO NOT SPEND TIME learning about Him in His Word. In romance, this is the equivalent of saying, “I love you”, but then never reading the correspondence from the one you claim to love.

Bible study is not an adjunctive activity that we do occasionally and incidentally. Serious, committed, *daily* study of the Bible is the only way we can find and practice God’s will, especially in the operation of the gifts He has selected for us. When we study, our progress will be “plain to all”, and our gifts will be evident.

For a complete study on gifts, see the chapter by that name in *Studies on Maturing as a Christian*, available at [biblestudiesforchristiangrowth.com](http://biblestudiesforchristiangrowth.com).

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What is the purpose of our gifts?

**Question 2.** Have you discovered your gift(s)?

**Question 3.** What two conditions facilitate the operation of our gifts?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Eph. 4:8**—When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.

**1 Cor. 4:7**—Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

## *Remember*

All gifts provide special abilities for unique service to be rendered for the purpose of edifying believers and providing the gospel to unbelievers. All service is to be done in God’s power.



## ***D. Able to Bear the Fruit of the Spirit***

Gal. 5:22 gives a good view of the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces. This verse says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such there is no law.” These are direct outcomes of fellowship and the filling of the Spirit. When we see the term “goodness” (righteousness), or such terms as “love”, “joy”, and “peace”, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit is nearby as the One who *makes these happen*, because this kind of fruit is *supernaturally* produced. The production of this fruit in us requires us to have a *supernatural connection*.

Col. 3:12-17 gives another set of products fabricated by the Spirit, and lists the fruit He bears through us, as follows:

- Showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience
- Bearing with one another
- Forgiving grievances
- Putting on love, which binds all of these together
- Letting the peace of Christ rule in your hearts
- Letting the Word of God live in you richly as your gift functions to build others up
- Doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (i.e., in fellowship), giving thanks to God the Father through Him

These qualities are closely associated with fellowship and the filling of the Spirit. When we see this fruit, bright lights come on, spotlighting the One who causes the fruit to grow. We need close contact with the Spirit, or we will dry up on the vine.

Sometimes the fruit of the Spirit is seen under extreme circumstances, such as those which afflicted Paul. 2 Cor. 6:3-10 describes some of the things Paul went through, and the exceptional fruit that came out of those times. We will take this passage up in three segments. Verses 3-5 says this:

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger....

This was a time of great discomfort, indeed...even torture. Paul's work was dirty, stinky, painful, and scary. Yet, we see next what Paul's attitude was, because of the relationship and fellowship he had with the Father. Verses 6-7 provides this report:

...in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left....

Could there be a more poignant statement of the power of fellowship? In the middle of immense suffering, we see purity, knowledge, faith, and fellowship, where love and truth and the power of

God provided weapons of righteousness to defend against evil. Then in verses 8-10, we see the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit turning darkness to light, and death to life, as follows:

...through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

With each new pressure came new victory for Paul. Paul knew that God was with him during every second of his destitution. He felt rich and blessed, and even joyful, through all his suffering, because of his connection with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit strengthened him on the inside, and gave him a new view-point of all that was happening on the outside. This is what fellowship does.

There are three primary “fruits” of the Spirit that are seen repeatedly...these are “joy”, “peace”, and “love”. We give these special consideration here, because they are important, and because they represent the kinds of fruit that the Spirit brings about. The following shows how each of these affect us, and the role of the Spirit in making them happen:

1. **Joy.** Joy is a human emotion, and when we think of joy, we often associate it with emotional exhilaration, or exuberant feelings. But *joy is a fruit of the Spirit*, which is a *supernatural* condition, generated and sustained by the filling and control of the Holy Spirit. *Without* the control of the spirit, the way that joy is “felt” or “expressed” is irrelevant, as such feelings have no spiritual underpinning. *With* the control of the Spirit, however, joy will be an expression of God.

Since true joy is produced by the Spirit, then spirituality must *precede* it. Joy from any other source will be worldly and fleshly...not genuine. 1 Thess. 1:6b confirms that joy comes from the Spirit, saying, “...you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” This is found also in Phil. 1:26b, which says, “...so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.” And again in Rom. 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

2. **Peace.** The surprising thing about the definition of peace is that its use in Scripture often conveys the concept of “reconciliation”, which results in “harmonious relations”. And it can also mean “completeness”. (Endnote 14) The spiritual implications of these definitions cannot be overlooked. “Reconciliation” between God and a believer occurs at confession. This restores “harmony” and allows progress toward “completeness”, seen ultimately as maturity. When we as believers are reconciled to God, it is because we have been “updating” our fellowship through confession.

Peace is another fruit of the Spirit, and is a benefit of grace. Before His ascension, Jesus comforted His disciples with this:

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of eve-

rything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

The reason the disciples had nothing to fear was that the Holy Spirit was going to come to them, as He does now to each of us, and He will not only *give* peace, He *is* peace. This peace is more than babbling brooks in the mountains, or serene sunsets in the desert, or restful and restorative music in secluded chambers. This is the Spirit of God filling us with His power to give us peace and strength among all the bullets and grenades that Satan is hurling at us, so that we can stand fast in the middle of furious battles. This peace has power; this peace is ready for war. This peace coats us with armor, as per Eph. 6:15, which shows us walking in this way: "...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." Knowledge of peace (fellowship) shows us how to be reconciled, and how to maintain readiness.

3. **Love.** Love is required. The command to love is urgent and repetitive. And love is the ultimate evidence of our faith. We want to love, but when we look at God's standards for love, we know we can't live up to them and discover quickly that we are going to have to get some help. The stringent standards for love include the following, among others:
  1. Love each other deeply. 1 Pet. 4:8 says, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins."
  2. Put on the breastplate of love and faith. 1 Thess. 5:8a states, "But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate."
  3. Edify fellow believers, regardless of maturity levels. Rom. 15:1-2 says, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves."
  4. Encourage fellow believers. 1 Thess. 5:11 gives us this: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."
  5. Love your brothers. 1 Thess. 4:9 and 11 says the following: "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other...Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you."
  6. Show compassion. Zech. 7:9b-10 says, "Show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of [or plot against] each other."
  7. Avoid "faking" love. Rom. 12:9a says, "Love must be sincere."
  8. Live a life of love. Eph. 2a admonishes, "Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us."

We could go on. We must be reminded: God is the source for love. In John 13:34, Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." The implications of this proscription are staggering. We are to love *as Jesus loved!* But can we ever hope to manufacture the love of God? No. The only way we can love as Christ loved is to have His love running through us.

There are many passages that show where divine love comes from. We give only a few here:

- 2 Thess. 4:9—Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves **have been taught by God to love** each other.
- 2 Thess. 3:5—May the **Lord direct your hearts into God's love** and Christ's perseverance.
- Rom. 5:5—And hope does not disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love** into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Everything worthwhile comes from the Holy Spirit. Nothing we can ever do, no matter how noble or great it may seem, is a match for what we can do when we walk in the Spirit, and let Him lead the way.

Thus we see that love, joy, and peace of the divine sort are produced by the Holy Spirit...*only*. There are many other fruits, such as worship and prayer, and many other things that we can do in the Spirit. (For more details on these, we refer you again to our books at [biblestudiesforchristian-growth.com](http://biblestudiesforchristian-growth.com). The books can be downloaded for free.)

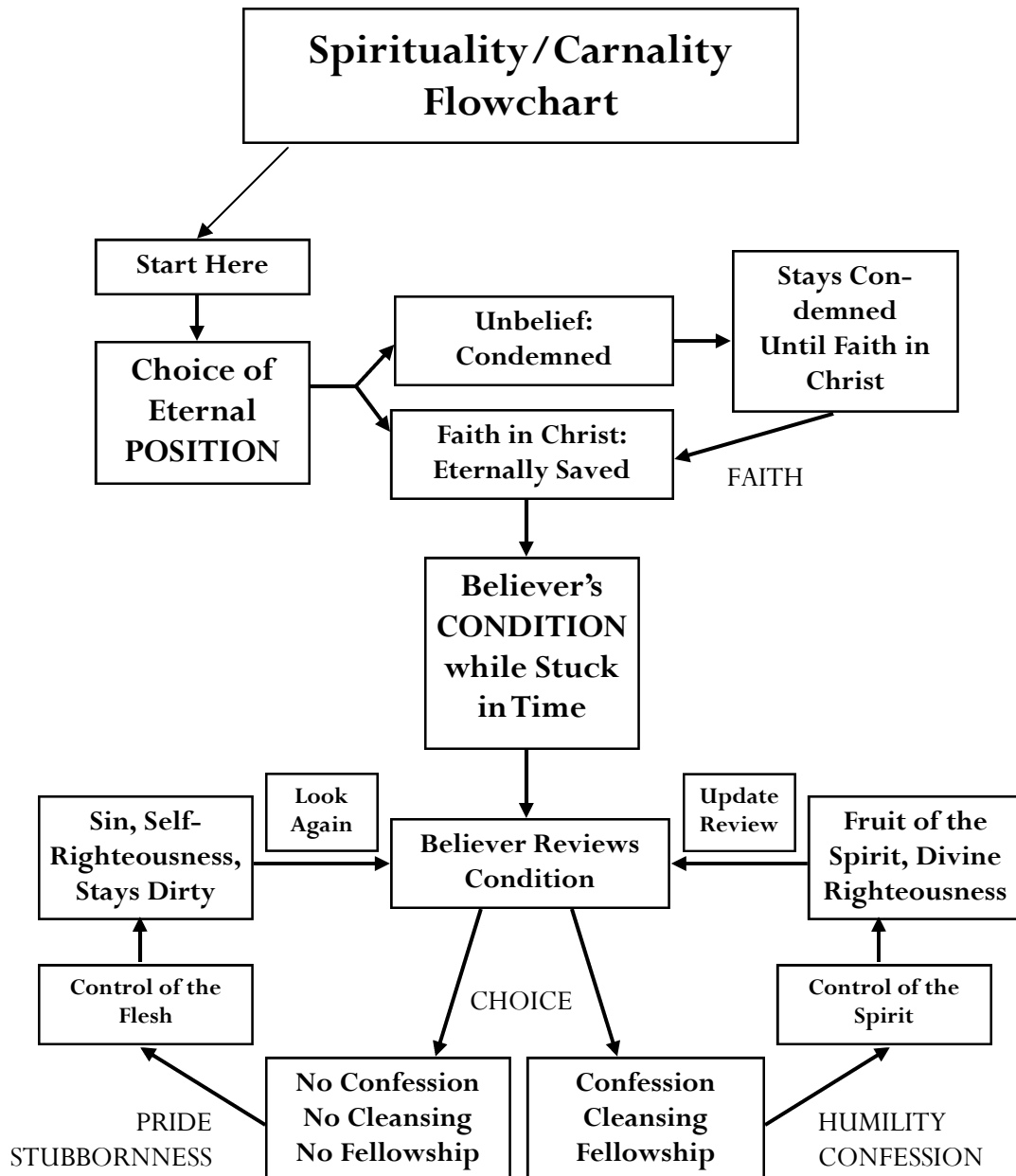
We want to “walk in the Spirit”, because if we do not, there are things we will *not* be able to do, such as the following:

Prayer  
Worship  
Glorifying God  
Pleasing God  
Having everything work together for good  
Loving man and God  
Producing God's righteousness  
Overcoming sin  
Fellowshipping with God  
Trusting God to supply all needs  
Submitting to God's will  
Understanding Scripture  
Knowing God's will

There are more. If we do not walk in the Spirit, we cannot acknowledge God, give thanks, be content, witness for Christ, exercise our gifts to edify believers, have God's plan work for us, or get wisdom. We see that IT IS CRUCIAL FOR US TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. When we are separated from the vine, we can bear no fruit.

(On the next two pages, we have inserted a “recap” chart and a table. These consist of 1) a flow chart for spirituality and carnality, and 2) a list of verses that describe or illustrate confession of sins as a means to fellowship and spirituality. )

## *E. Spirituality Flowchart and Confession Verses*



## Verses on Confession

Here are selected verses that reflect either the procedures for confession, or examples of confession, as seen in the Bible (add others, as you find them):

Lev. 26:40-42	Ps. 51:7-17	Ezek. 20:43
Num. 21:7	Ps. 69:5	Ezek. 37:23
Deut. 4:29-31	Ps. 106:6	Dan. 9:5-7
Deut. 30:1-10	Ps. 119:176	Dan. 10:12
II Sam. 24:10	Ps. 130:1-4	Hos. 5:15
I Ki. 8:33-50	Prov. 28:13	Hos. 14:1-2
II Chron. 7:14	Is. 6:5	Joel 2:12-14
II Chron. 30:9	Is. 38:17	Micah 7:9
Ezra 9:6-10	Is. 44:22	John 13:1-17
Neh. 1:6-7	Is. 55:6-7	John 15:1-8
Neh. 9:2	Is. 59:12	Rom. 2:4
Neh. 9:33-35	Jer. 3:12-13	II Cor. 7:9-11
Job 33:8-12	Jer. 3:25	Eph. 5:14
Job 36:10	Jer. 4:14	James 4:8-10
Job 40:45	Jer. 14:7	I Tim. 2:25
Ps 32:5	Jer. 14:20	I Jn. 1:9
Ps. 34:14-18	Jer. 18:8	Rev. 3:1-3
Ps. 38:3-5	Jer. 31:18-19	Rev. 3:19
Ps. 38:18	Lam. 3:39-42	
Ps. 40:12	Ezek. 14:6	
Ps. 41:4	Ezek. 18:27-28	
Ps. 51:1-4	Ezek. 18:30-31	

## *Key Points: Part Six*

- The Holy Spirit is God.
- The Holy Spirit lives in the “heart”—the innermost self—of each believer.
- The Holy Spirit teaches and produces the character of Christ through us.
- We cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit unless He controls us.
- Filling of and control by the Holy Spirit are based on fellowship (a state of being “cleansed” through confession, and a growing faith).
- God’s grace program and grace assets are administered by the Holy Spirit.
- Sin and faith in ourselves break our fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
- It is only by the Holy Spirit that we can meet God’s standards and glorify Christ.
- Our “walk” in the power of the Holy Spirit is accomplished through confession, accompanied by prayer, study, faith, and endurance.

## *Segue to Part Seven*

We know where to get the power we must have to meet God's requirements. But do we know the richness of the life God offers those who actually get that power? Part Seven, "Drawing Near to God" is not only about being qualified to get close to God to draw on His *strength*. It is about being close to Him for the *provisions* that can fill our lives and *bless* us, as we grow in His knowledge and grace. Part Seven discloses God's *blessings*, and cites passages in Scripture that show His commitment to "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work in us."

If we satisfy Part One through Part Six, we will qualify for the blessings described in Part Seven. The *proviso* is what is required to get the *provision*. We have seen the most important techniques (the proviso) and now we are ready for the provision. After we introduce a couple of refinement techniques, including learning about God's will and surrendering to it, we will be ready to get into the heart of the endless blessings God is waiting to give us. Once again, bring a basket...or two.



# Part Seven

# Drawing Near to God

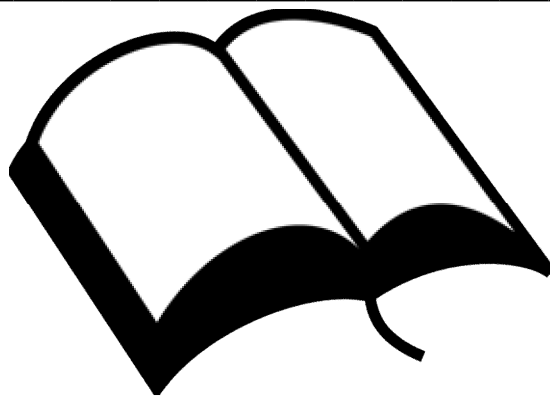
## *In This Part...*

Chapter 29: *Knowing God's Will*

Chapter 30: *Surrendering to God*

Chapter 31: *Approaching the Throne*

Chapter 32: *Living in God's Kindness*



**Jer. 29:11**—*For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you  
and not to harm you.*

## Chapter 29

# Knowing God's Will

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Introducing God's Will*
- B. Searching for God's Will*
- C. Learning God's Will*

### *A. Introducing God's Will*

God's will is the ultimate expression of the Creator. It is what He *wants*. And—being God—if He wants it, He gets it. But, in His divine sovereignty, He has chosen to give man *choice*. He did this for His own reasons, but obviously this arrangement fits His justice. Furthermore, giving us choice gives us a chance to voluntarily *choose Him*, a choice He **VALUES**. In giving us choice, God chooses to limit Himself in ways that give selected organisms in Creation the ability to make decisions. It was His will to give us a will. (For a full discussion on “election”—predestination—and “choice”, see our book, *Studies on Living in the Plan of God*.)

Even though He gave us a choice, He still does not want us to choose evil over Him. Evil in the world is a problem that He had to solve, something which He did through His Son. As a result, we are free to choose God over evil. God wants us to choose Him and then to come to know Him. So He has given us information about His will, so we can learn what He wants. That information is in His Word.

God's will includes all aspects of the events and outcomes of His created universe. He has a will for eternity, one for creation, one for mankind, one for history, one for believers, and one for YOU. There are other ways that His will can be examined, but our purpose for this study is to see the parts of God's will that make salvation available, and that affect us in our Christian walk.

One aspect of God's will that we can readily discern is that He wants everyone to be saved by believing in His Son. And for those who accept Christ, it is His will that none of them will be "lost". John 6:38-40 says this:

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

In addition, God *wants* all to be saved. His PLAN is that those who *believe* will become His children, and He wants *everyone* to believe. Matt. 18:14 says, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." 2 Pet. 3:9b says, "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." God wants us to exercise *our* will to satisfy *His* will by accepting Christ and being saved from condemnation.

God's will is a big topic. We cannot look at every single aspect of it in this short study, but we will highlight next some pronouncements that stand out in the Word, as a warm-up for other specific things that we will be examining concerning God's will:

- God's Word will accomplish its purpose. Isaiah 55:11 states, "...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." The Truth will speak for itself to accomplish His will for it.
- Part of our acknowledging God is recognizing the power of His will. David gave an acknowledgement of God with this in mind: "I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods" (Ps. 135:5). Then we see further recognition of the power of God's will in Ps. 135:6a, which says, "The Lord does whatever pleases him." Ps. 115:3 echoes this, "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him."
- God's "will" decides who will be kings or rulers. Nebuchadnezzar learned a tough lesson about God's will: his pride caused him to be removed as king. Dan. 4:30 shows Nebuchadnezzar saying this, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built...by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" He had forgotten that God places rulers and removes them, as He wills; he was thinking he was king without God's help. Daniel spoke for God, telling Nebuchadnezzar he would be removed as king pending specific events, as seen here: "Seven times [years] will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Dan. 4:32). Nebuchadnezzar spent seven miserable years "out of office". Incidentally, we can apply this to leaders in the world today, who are in positions of authority...God put them there. Since God puts our leaders in place, we should honor them. They are there because they serve His purposes.
- God's will determines the gifts that will be given to believers. I Cor.12:18 says that God distributes spiritual gifts as He chooses. The gifts He gives us are part of His specific will for our individual lives. Knowing our gifts is part of knowing His will for us.
- It is God's will that we give thanks. I Thess. 5:18 instructs us to "give thanks in all circum-

stances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

- Knowing God's will enables us to ask for things according to what He wants. I Jn. 5:14-15 tells us, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

We see from these verses that God's will is often succinctly stated. There are other such declarative verses. For example, we learn from Scripture that it is God's will for us to be “sanctified”, which means that He wants us to be cleansed by the Holy Spirit. 1 Thess. 4:3 is our source for this, saying, “It is God's will that you should be sanctified.” And it may be God's will that we “suffer”, as per 1 Pet. 4:19, which says, “Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” This tells us that, whenever we suffer, we should continue to maintain a commitment to His will. We will see other instances, as we proceed.

When *unbelievers* seek God's will, they find salvation. When *believers* seek God's will, they find the techniques and promises that enable them to please Him, thus enabling them to fulfill His will. This is applying Scripture through 1) assimilating its truths, and 2) using the wisdom acquired to walk in truth and trust. There is an almost “automatic” outcome in the lives of mature believers in fellowship, which is that God's will is going to be satisfied in them. Why? *Because God is controlling them.* Knowing and doing God's will, then, are greatly influenced by spiritual conditioning.

Then there is a “will of God” that is an expression of His plan for each of us at a detailed level...the personalized will of God for each of us. When individual believers seek the will of God for themselves personally, great wisdom and maturity are pre-requisite. This “will” lies beyond the standardized will that God has for all believers (techniques, principals, etc.). This is the most-intimate form of God's will. We will look at this “individualized will” more closely in Section C.

We will consider next the process of searching for God's will, as it applies to believers.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What is it that God's sovereign will has given us, without which we would just be pre-programmed robots?

**Question 2.** What is God's basic will for mankind?

**Question 3.** What is our primary resource for learning about God's will?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Heb. 10:9-10**—Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first [Old Testament sacrifices] to establish the second [the sacrifice of Christ on the cross]. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**Ps. 40:8**—I desire to do your will, O my God, your law is within my heart.

## ***Remember***

God's will is important to us, because it tells us what He wants. Knowing His will clarifies our purpose. Everything we have studied in this book is to prepare us to know and do God's will, by following His plan and by using His prescribed methods for divine achievement.

## ***B. Searching for God's Will***

If we want God, we will seek Him. If we want to know God's will, we will search for it. And if we search for God and His will, WE WILL FIND THEM! Luke 11:9 says, "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Our attention must be focused on this search. To locate and enter the shelter of grace, we must do this:

1. Ask—keep on asking for grace and to have all needs met.
2. Seek—persistently search for God's truth and God's will.
3. Knock—keep on knocking to gain entry into God's will and truth.

Our asking and seeking can include a petition for our needs, but the objective of our search is *knowing God's will*. We want to establish close contact with God through maturity, so we can know His will, and find the grace and power to fulfill it.

1 Chron. 16:11 urges us to seek Him, saying, "Look for the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." Ps. 34:4-10 mandates this also, as follows:

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Matt. 6:33 tells us that we are to do our seeking FIRST, saying this: "But seek first his kingdom [power] and his righteousness [fruit of the Spirit], and all these things [provisions] will be given to you as well." By seeking God's power and righteousness *first*, we will see all our needs taken care of...all things will be supplied! But first things first. We must seek His righteousness and His will before anything else. *Spiritual conditions determine divine favor*. Our highest priority must be given to spiritual preparation and the affairs of the heart. If we seek favor first, we will never find it. If we seek righteousness first, we will find favor.

When our hearts are laser-focused on knowing and following God's will, and we are walking in the Spirit, we will fulfill 1 Tim. 6:6-19, which calls on us to be *content* with what we have and maintain a divine perspective. Here is what we see in verses 6-9 from that passage:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and

we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

If getting “stuff” is an angle we are playing with God, it will not work. God sees our hearts. Our *true focus* must be on God, His Word, and His will, for us to have the contentment Paul talked about. The contentment that comes when we walk in the Spirit overrides preoccupation with the things of the world. When we have the heavenly view point we will “take hold of the life that is truly life” (1 Tim. 6:19). Verse 11b in 1 Tim. 6 challenges us to pursue spiritual good: “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness”. This is the output of a believer who is walking in the Spirit. And this is where contentment is found.

Eph. 5:15-17 draws us closer to our objective of finding God's will, saying the following:

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish; but understand what the will of the Lord is.

The opposite of “foolishness” is “understanding”, which leads to “wisdom”. Knowledge of God's will runs through wisdom. And the backdrop for knowing and being wise is found in the next verse (Eph. 5:18), which gives the command: “Be filled with the Spirit”.

In seeking God's will, we must pray to find it, as per Ps. 86:11, where David was praying, “Teach me your way, O Lord; and I will walk in your truth.” Ps. 25:4-5 shows this again, saying, “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me.” And Ps. 143:10 says, “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.” Finally, Col. 1:9-12 reports Paul's prayer that the Colossians would come to full knowledge of God's will. This passage says this:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

This passage is packed with truth: When we are filled with knowledge of God's will, we can please Him, we can bear fruit, and we can increase our faith...as we give thanks to Him. So it is possible to know God's will, and for this to be our boost into “life worthy of the Lord”.

The tie between knowing God's Word and finding God's will is strong. This is confirmed in Rom. 12:2, which says the following:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good,

pleasing, and perfect will.

We are seeking the ability to ascertain (“test and approve”) God’s will. This is aided by getting a “mental make-over”. Knowing the Word gives us the ability to determine the “good, pleasing, and perfect will” of God, so we can make decisions based on that will...while maintaining the posture that God is the One that accomplishes everything good.

We will continue to search, through fellowship, prayer, and study, because we want “true life”...life based on truth (1Tim. 6:19).

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** If we want to know God’s will, we will \_\_\_\_\_ for it.

**Question 2.** If we search for God’s will, we will \_\_\_\_\_ it.

**Question 3.** Name three things that we can do when we are filled with knowledge.

## *Other Scriptures*

**Ps. 37:4**—Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

## *Remember*

Above all other pursuits, we seek knowledge of God’s will, where we can find true life.

## *C. Learning God's Will*

When we learn about God’s will, we will discover that it is not about doing just *one thing*; it is about doing *anything* that God requires, trusting that *God's way* is the *perfect way*. It is agreeing to do His will. Commitment to God’s will means commitment to God, with faith that He will work in us what pleases Him.

God’s will can be known only by those who are committed to following it, which involves consistent use of the techniques and believing God’s promises (more on promises coming soon). When our spiritual condition is one of ongoing fellowship, and our level of growth is stretching toward the level of “maturity”, we will be moving by graduated degrees toward a full understanding of God’s will.

God’s will always follows His Word...there will be no contradiction between what He wants for the world, the church, and individual believers...and what He has revealed to us in His Word. They are in full complicity, and are often identical. But we must be careful. There is no fixed limit to God’s will, as it drops down to the level of “every hair on your head”, and His will at that level is *personalized* and *individualized*. When we get down to the level of God’s *specific* will, the possibilities are

endless, and require great maturity and spirituality to grasp.

The will of God is “good”, “acceptable”, and “perfect”, as per Rom. 12:2, and it is only God Who can *perfectly* work His will. If WE are the ones taking the initiative to “work” God’s will, God’s will is not at work. But if God is working His will through us, it will most assuredly be fulfilled. Satan’s fall was based on his pursuit of his own will, when he said, “I will.” Our entire Christian experience is predicated upon the answer to this question: “Who will?” If we say “I will”, and exclude God, failure is guaranteed. If we say “God will”, concerning “God’s will”, success is promised.

Our pattern is to follow the pattern of Christ: “I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). Our lives are not to be lived with focus on ourselves, but on Him, as per 2 Cor. 5:15b: “...that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” This is the full commitment of faith...to do God’s will as we learn it. And doing that “will” depends on our being *equipped* to do it, as we see in Heb. 13:20-21, which says the following:

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus...equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

When we accept God’s will as the perfect way, and pick up His equipment to enable us to walk in that way, we will be saying to Him, “I know that your plan is perfect, that your power is absolute, and that all outcomes belong to you.” We are not giving God permission to be Himself; we are interjecting ourselves into His heavenly picture by submitting ourselves to Him.

When we “give it all to Him”, we will be demonstrating the kind of faith that enables us to do incredible things by His power. Then we will say, “Your will, not mine.” When we plan our lives, then, we must shape our intentions to match God’s proscriptions. When we *plan* what we *intend*, we must let James 4:15-16 advise us, as follows: “Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’. As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”

When we learn God’s will from His Word, we will be equipped to perform God’s uniform will for believers, which is the same for all of us. This gets us near the peak of all Christian experience. But we want to reach the very top, and that summit is reserved for precious few.

God’s Word gives us God’s standards for the world, and—in addition—tells us what He expects of believers. But there is a more precise “will” of God, one that goes beyond the universal, and exceeds compliance with His uniform standards for believers. This “will” penetrates into detailed areas of our lives, and expresses a plan for each individual Christian. Eph. 5:17, seen earlier, cites the *uniform* will of God for believers, when it says, “...understand what the will of the Lord is.” But then Eph. 5:10 adds this: “...find out what pleases the Lord”. We are at the point of refining the difference between understanding the will of God and knowing what pleases Him.

Understanding God’s will is learning all that Scripture tells us about what He expects of believers. But it is our belief that, when we know what “pleases the Lord”, we will start to see the *differentiated*



(individualized) will of God...which is different for each believer. This differentiated “will” involves administration of God’s will as an individual plan for each believer. He is BIG ENOUGH to deal with all the situations and unique plans of all believers...at the same time...and all the time. He is capable of watching over each one, actually executing a plan He formulated for each of us in eternity past...based on His foreknowledge of our choices.

We believe that God has a specific will for all things in your life: spiritual gifts, where to live, relationships, vocations, and so on. When we can distinguish God’s will at this level, we can achieve the greatest good known to mankind, and be closer to God than we ever thought possible. This requires a higher and separate level of maturity, a “Stage Two”, if you please. At this level, we will be close enough to God that we will be able to discover God’s *differentiated will*. We will be fulfilling an incredible number of scriptures when we reach this level, as in Prov. 3:6, which says, “In all your ways acknowledge him, and He will make straight your paths.” Acknowledging Him in *all our ways* suggests super-maturity.

Here is the tricky part: The differentiated will of God is not recorded in the Bible. God’s special will for you, those things He wants YOU to do that will please Him, will only be known when you have reached a level of maturity that allows you to see them. His plan is recorded for you in a book, as it were, which has your name on it. This is your story...the story of your life. You are the subject; God is the author. You can forget about this book with your name on it, right now...ignore it and walk away...or you can seek with every breath to reach a level of connection with the Holy Spirit that will allow you to crack the cover on this book, so you can look inside to see what God wants for you personally.

Ps. 139:16*b* says, “All the days ordained [planned] for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” When we see the complete will of God, we will have come to the edge of His glory, where we can see His light, and know that God is near. Then we will see Is. 30:21 fulfilled in our lives: “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” Father, let us get this close to you.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** God’s will is not just doing one particular thing; it is doing \_\_\_\_\_ that God requires.

**Question 2.** What statement did Satan make that resulted in his fall, that we also tend to make?

**Question 3.** What is the ultimate form of knowing God’s will?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Matt. 6:10*b***—...your will be done.

## ***Remember***

To know God's will, we must learn about it in His Word. When we reach a certain level of maturity, we can get additional direction from God on His *personalized* will for each of us. It is our goal to reach this point.

## Chapter 30

# Surrendering to God

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Preparations for Surrendering*
- B. Choosing to Commit*
- C. Surrendering it All to God*
- D. Waiting on the Lord*

### *A. Preparations for Surrendering*

Preparation for surrendering assumes that we are using the foundational techniques, including confession, prayer, and study. But there are conditions beyond these that prepare us to surrender to God and His will. These include choosing “first things”, having a mature faith, and expressing true humility. These enable a “yeildedness” to God’s will and plan.

From the most rudimentary embryo of our positive volition toward God...to the pinnacle of maturity and faith, we must always be seeking God, searching for His will, and surveying His truth. If we seek God, choose Him, believe Him...in short, are DEVOTED to Him...we will be moving toward proximity with Him, and will be cared for by Him. But this kind of attention to God is a choice that we must make constantly. We must choose “first things”. Do we choose God or do we chase after something (or someone) else, such as money? We take time here to quote Matt. 6:19-24, in its entirety, to amplify this question and suggest an answer:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your

whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

By choosing money over God, we are choosing second things first, and this places us into the darkness of carnality. Delivery of supplies cannot be made in the dark, which is where we are when we choose a substitute for God. This means that God's provision is cut off. The world may kick a few things our way in this darkness, but these are not from God, and will not satisfy. On the other hand, if we use the techniques, and believe His promises, God will give us what we need.

But there is a punch line for the message just seen in the passage above, which we find in verse 33 of the same chapter (Matt. 6). This verse says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." God's kingdom is His POWER...and His plan. His righteousness is His PURITY. We access the power and participate in His plan by claiming His righteousness through confession. We seek these FIRST, because they deserve the highest priority, and because they do the most good. And these prepare us to surrender.

Another component in preparation for surrendering to God's will is a mature faith. Strong faith is a producer of and a conductor for surrender. Surrender is the peak of acknowledging God and fearing the Lord. When we get close to God through a walk in the Spirit, and are thereby walking by faith, we will be in a position to SUBMIT to Him and follow His will. The heart of our being "in Him" and His being "in us" is found in *surrender*.

God is the source of all good things, the Ultimate Energy, the origin of everything. When we really see this, we will fear Him, and surrender to Him. We'll refine our understanding of surrender shortly, but right now we are concentrating on the conditions that must exist *before* we can surrender. Faith is a staging condition for surrender. Believing that he exists, "trusting in Him with all our hearts", and living by faith...these are the qualities of the mature believer, and the preparation we need for surrendering to God.

One other condition that contributes to our readiness for surrendering to God is humility. As we grow, we see God more clearly...and what we see causes us to respond with awe, reverence, and fear. Col. 3:12 tells us that we should be clothed with, among other things, *humility*. Eph. 4:2 tells us to be "completely humble and gentle", while James 4:6 gives us the reason for being humble: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." If we try to elevate ourselves, we will be held back, but if we are humble, God will raise us up, as we see in Matt. 23:12, which says, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." God elevates the humble.

Humility precedes honor (Prov. 15:33), and we can only learn when we are humble (Ps. 25:9). Humility is a big part of confession (Ps. 34:18), and the prayers of the humble will be heard (1 Chron. 7:14). The humble will also be blessed (2 Chron. 7:15). When we reach a level of maturity that acknowledges that we are nothing without God, and that our achievements mean nothing when they

do not come from Him, we will come to possess a new sense of “God-worth”, rather than “self-worth”, and know that our hearts must kneel before the true and living God. We must be humble.

1 Cor. 2:16b says “...But we have the mind of Christ.” And what is the mind of Christ? Surely it is a sense of divinity and greatness...of power and glory. But look more closely at this mind that should be “ours”. Phil. 2:6-9 describes the *attitude* of this mind, as follows:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even the death on a cross!

Notice the yielded nature of Christ’s commitment to His Father’s will. He was completely humble and submissive. This is the mind we are to have. If Jesus Christ, as the God-man, did not seek equality with God, but sought only submission to His Father, how much more should we accept our dependency on Him, and give in to His will and plan for our lives? Our mind-set is to be one of surrender.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What three conditions were identified in this section as preliminary to surrendering to God’s will?

**Question 2.** Faith is a \_\_\_\_\_ for surrender.

**Question 3.** True or false: Jesus Christ, as God-man, considered Himself equal to God.

## *Other Scriptures*

**Prov. 15:33**—The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

**Ps. 25:9**—He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

## *Remember*

The three conditions that must exist before we can surrender to God’s will are these: choosing “first things”, which involves seeking God’s power and His cleansing; developing a mature faith; and expressing humility. When these are satisfied, we will be ready to surrender.

## *B. Choosing to Commit*

“Surrender” means to release all outcomes into God’s care...trusting Him and allowing Him to direct our lives and provide for us in ways that contribute to our growth—within the confines and content of our own choices. Surrender is commitment, submission, and yielding. Commitment and

submission are more active, whereas surrender seems to be more “passive”. When we “commit” to God, we make a choice to turn events in our lives over to God. When we “surrender”, we enter a place of quiet trust where we are calmly waiting for God to work His perfect will.

In this section, we will look at the more “active” side of surrender, and refer to this as “commitment”. In the next section, we will look at surrender *per se*. Commitment has many pieces. It is not a one-time decision; it is many decisions...to *choose* God and to be committed to His plan, even in the fog of ongoing battles.

When we “commit”, we “sign-up, which is volunteering for service...and we do this over and over. Commitment is “trust” and “fear”, which graduate into higher expressions of “faith” and “love”, seen as 1) submission of our bodies, and 2) love for God. These are signs of maturity, and clear expressions of commitment. We will discuss each of these briefly, as follows:

1. **Submitting our Bodies to God.** 1 Cor. 6:20 says, “You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” Rom. 6:11b-14 adds this:

...count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

When we offer our bodies to God, we do so because we are free to operate under His grace, *not* because we are embracing a code that we are conscripted to live by. We are not tethered to the Law, as the Law cannot keep us from sinning, but we are tied to grace, which is where we find the power of God to overcome sin and live out the victory. This is where we find the freedom to submit ourselves to God.

2. **Loving God Without Reservation.** As we mature, love becomes increasingly the norm for thought and action. We ultimately learn to love God with every blink, or breath, or thought, or beat of our hearts. Mark 12:30 calls on us to *love God* this way, saying, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Keathley provides some insights on this, which we blend with our own, in the following:

- A. **Heart.** Heart-love is fellowship with God, our inner person wanting God and relating to Him as our Father...staying close to Him by confessing our sins.
- B. **Soul.** Soul-love is submission of our bodies to God, along with our physical lives and our self-concepts. This is commitment...giving our lives to God.
- C. **Mind.** Mind-love is commitment to God through faithful study of His Word. Our ideas, viewpoint, and perspective are characterized by our not leaning on our own understanding, but thinking and acting in alignment with God’s Word. (Prov. 3:5-6; Rom. 12:2)

- D. **Strength.** Strength-love includes submission of our abilities, talents, gifts, and physical powers. Our strength yields to His power by faith. This is the commitment of trust in Him. (Endnote 15)

To know this kind of submission to and love for God, we must make many choices along the way that say “yes” to God. Choices measure perhaps in the millions each day, according to some, as life bombards us with what psychologists call “stimuli”. These inundate us with an endless array of input and images that can overwhelm us, especially in this “information age”. For us to make the right choices and stay focused on God requires PROFUSE PREPARATION. If we are not prepared, we will only “react” in knee-jerk fashion to the events in our lives...responding like any unbeliever...with trust in man or the world or self, rather than God. Commitment is based on knowing God’s will, and being dedicated to the existence, purpose, and outcomes of God’s perfect plan.

As we mature, the responses we make will become more positive. Positive responses involve confession, understanding, prayer, faith, walking in the Spirit, acknowledgement of God, being still, waiting on the Lord (the last two still upcoming), thanksgiving, humility, and endurance of God’s training. These PREPARE US. And commitment is the *finale*. Commitment is the ultimate response to grace, the end result of accumulated positive responses, as we embrace His plan. Then we can breathe, watch, trust, enjoy, and wait, knowing that God is working, and His plan will not fail.

As we commit to God’s plan, our own plans will conform to His. Prov. 16:1-3 says the following:

To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

We are to make plans...these “belong” to us...but if our motives are not aligned with God’s will and His plan, our plans will not succeed. Notice the key word in this passage: “Commit”. When we are committed to God, we will choose to roll all anxiety onto Him, believe His Word that He will care for us, and know that He will work all outcomes “for our good”. Prov. 16:9 says, “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” God determines all outcomes. When we understand this, we will commit to Him, and the outcomes will not only be “for our good”, but will bless us.

Ps. 37:5-6 says, “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.” When we commit to Him and trust Him, God brings righteousness...and causes our plans to succeed. And when we commit, we can rest, as per Ps. 37:7a and 9b, which—quoted together—say, “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him...those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land [receive blessings].”

James 4:7 commands, “Submit yourselves, then, to God.” Job 22:21 says, “Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.” God will bless us, when we sincerely commit to Him. This outcome of maturity is a worthy pursuit.

## Checking for Understanding

**Question 1.** True or false: Commitment is a once-for-all event.

**Question 2.** Name the two forms of commitment, or submission, cited in this section.

**Question 3.** For us to make right choices each day, we must be \_\_\_\_\_ .

## Other Scriptures

**Ps. 37:23a**—If the Lord delights in a man's way [his plan], he makes his steps firm.

**1 Pet. 4:19**—So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

**2 Chron. 30:8**—Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the Lord. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated. Serve the Lord you God, so his fierce anger will turn away from you.

## Remember

The choices we make each day collect—with cumulative effects—as either commitment to God or departure from God. If we will get on the right track...to growth and spirituality...we will develop the kind of faith that will enable us to commit to God and His will.

## C. Surrendering it All to God

When our condition is “right” with God, He will take care of us, and we will be content with what He provides. That contentment may be more important than the actual provision. Our sense of peace and joy and contentment may be the *main part* of the provision...or the *point* of it. Knowing that we are in fellowship and that we are in God's will is paramount...knowing that He is watching over us brings joy and security. Heb. 13:5-6 develops this line of thought, saying this:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I forsake you.” So we may say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

God is going to protect us, and nothing is going to happen to us that is not part of His plan. When we are “walking in the Spirit”, we can expectantly wait on God's provision and protection. Ps. 27:13-14 says, “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Wait...and believe.

Ps. 55:22 carries us beyond “waiting” to the place of provision, saying, “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” 1 Pet. 5:6-7 echoes this concept, saying this: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.



Cast all your anxiety [cares] on him because he cares for you.” Phil. 4:6-7 fleshes this out even further, offering the following:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

All of this has to do with training our focus onto God, to whom we will surrender. Casting, presenting, submitting, trusting: These are the actions of surrendering. This is giving it all to Him...our cares, our dreams, ourselves...all to Him. The old hymn coined it well: “I surrender all...all to Jesus I surrender...I surrender all.” We give everything to him...our sins, our problems, our aspirations, our disappointments, our worries, our health, our well-being, our finances, our growth, and our faith. He will take care of all of these.

Jehoshaphat offered a prayer in 2 Chron. 20:12b, which illustrates surrender: “For we have no army to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.” Surrender is knowing where help comes from, and counting on the best-available source for solutions and sustenance for all circumstances, good or bad. Look to God. He knows what to do.

And guess how Jehoshaphat’s situation turned out....We see the outcome of his surrender in 2 Chron. 20:15-17, as follows:

Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah, and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.”

When we surrender to God’s will and subject ourselves to His power and plan, He will ask us to show up. But He is the One who will fight the battle for us. And He will prevail.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** What should we NOT be anxious about?

**Question 2.** What should we surrender to God?

**Question 3.** When we surrender to God, He will take care of \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Other Scriptures*

**Ps. 56:3-4**—When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

**Heb. 11:6**—And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to

him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

**Is. 26:4**—Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

**1 Sam. 7:47**—All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give all of you into our hands.

## ***Remember***

Surrender is relinquishment of our lives into the care of the true and living God. We let go, because we trust Him. Whatever we are walking through, we can be at ease, because He is with us.

## ***D. Waiting on the Lord***

God comes to us in time...in His own time...the time that He owns. His timing is perfect, fitting into the framework of His absolute control of everything. And sometimes His “time” puts us into a posture of “waiting”, but we must acknowledge the infinite wisdom of His timing and His plan. Acts 17:24-28 gives a good picture of God, who is beyond measurement, yet who gives us time and space, both of which are “measured”. Here is what this passage says:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and [He] does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

God determines all times and places, for all eternity, yet He is inside of each one of us, waiting for us to reach out to Him every day, to acknowledge Him, to draw near to Him. (For a complete discussion of God's “plan”, please see the book, *Studies on Living in God's Plan*.)

God has a set time for everything, and our response to the time that God allocates for events in our lives is to be one of trust...and “waiting”...not anxious waiting, but waiting in the rest of faith. Here are some verses that instruct us to “wait”:

- Ps. 37:34. “Wait for the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land.”
- Is. 26:8. “Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you.”
- Ps. 33:20. “We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.”
- Ps. 27:14. “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”
- Ps. 130:5. “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.”
- Mic. 7:7. “But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.”

- Hab. 2:3. “For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”
- Ps. 38:15. “I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord, my God.”
- Ps. 37:7. “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways when they carry out their wicked schemes.”

Even in waiting, we are blessed and cared for. And at the right time, the wait will be over, whatever it is we are waiting for. In the meantime, we can examine ourselves to ascertain that the delay is not the result of discipline, or the outcome of our not studying or trusting Him. If it is, we will need to do some extra make-up work while we are waiting.

Waiting that is attached to faith is waiting that perceives life as God sees it, and maintains aspirations and hopes that match God’s view-point, will, and plan. When we wait in faith, we know that God will supply our needs by the perfect standards of His plan, and that our waiting is actually surrendering, not only to the plan, but to God’s timing in the plan.

Is. 40:31 (NET) says, “But those who wait for the Lord’s help find renewed strength; they rise up as if they had eagles’ wings, they run without growing weary, they walk without getting tired.” So we can actually gain strength while we are waiting. Why is this? It is because our faith is tested while we wait, and we are using the techniques and trusting God while we are waiting, so our faith can grow.

One of the main things we are to do while we wait is to “stand still”. Ps. 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God.” God will not let us find comfort in any notion we might have that God is not important, or that He can be forgotten. On the contrary, standing still is an expression of focused faith and God-dependency, allowing God time to work in His own way. Ex. 14:13-14 frames this very well, as follows:

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

While we are waiting, and while we are still, we will continue praying, confessing, studying, and holding on to our faith, and as we grow, we will submit, surrender, and trust, keeping our eyes on God, confident that He is in control. Full protection and provision go to those who wait in stillness, and who give full acknowledgement to the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Ps. 33:10-18 punctuates this point, saying this:

The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever [never changing], the purposes of his heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love....

God controls everything, wrapping His sovereign plan around our choices. We don't always create all the *options*, but we make *choices* among the options we have. Our responsibility is to *choose God*. God's responsibility is *everything else*. Every millisecond and every molecular orbit is measured and planned by God...set in place and governed from the perspective of eternal time and eternal space. God oversees everything, from the most minute to the most gargantuan. And when we choose Him, He brings a divine juggernaut to preserve and keep us.

When we learn about God sufficiently that we can truly see Him as God, and can be still before Him, we can say, with the psalmist, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope" (Ps. 130:5). We wait in hope, because we trust His plan. Ps. 33:20-21 caps it, saying, "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name [power and authority]." His plan can be trusted. Knowing this, we can wait for Him in stillness.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** God's plan is interwoven into our lives around our \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Question 2.** Waiting on the Lord in stillness is an expression of \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Other Scriptures*

**Eccl. 3:1**—There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.

**1 Pet. 5:6**—Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

**Heb. 5:7**—During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

## *Remember*

Being still and waiting on the Lord is the highest form of trust. It is knowing that His plan is in operation, and that He alone controls all outcomes. We are quite busy when we are "still", as we are growing, learning, and serving until we drop. But spiritually, we are serene and restful.

## Chapter 31

# Approaching the Throne

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. God's Temple is Inside of Us*
- B. The Curtain is Opened Between God and Us*
- C. We can Enter the Most Holy Place*
- D. Approaching the Throne of Grace*

### *A. God's Temple is Inside of Us*

Our relationship with God is not conducted long-distance. When we pray we often look UP, and feature God as some abstract Person, very powerful, but remote...existing outside our galaxy somewhere...tuned in and aware of us, but somehow impersonally administering the affairs of man, the world, and the universe. He is “out there”...observing and moving the pieces on the board in front of Him, often not seen as Someone close. Sometimes we picture Him a little closer, maybe walking beside us, which is somewhat comforting.

But “beside us” is not where God “lives”, in His relationship with us. He is *inside* of us. God plays an intimate part in the lives of all believers. He is part of US and we are part of HIM. He is there within us, alternately relinquishing us to our wills, when we are out of fellowship; and empowering us, when He is in control. We can “draw near” to God by following His spiritual path, or we can step back from Him by choosing our own path of sin and self-dependency.

As we have stated before, God can come and go, in or out of space and time, and He is big enough to spend the span of our lifetimes attending to us personally, and to everyone else, simultaneously. We do not need to think that we are taxing God's schedule by taking up His time...He has an infinite supply of it. He can love, and look at, and plan for, and guide, and teach me personally, as if I

were the only person He ever noticed or cared for. I am right when I say that God loves me in a special way, but I am not the only one. He loves you the same way...and He loves us all. We are all precious to Him.

God is here within us, residing in a place called the “temple”. 1 Cor. 3:16 asks us, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s spirit lives in you?” This is new...brought in for the Church Age. The temple of the Old Testament was a physical structure that mirrored God’s “dwelling place” in heaven. And now that temple has been set up inside each of us, existing simultaneously with the temple in heaven.

The existence of the temple within us is confirmed in several places in Scripture. 2 Cor. 6:16 says, “What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.” It is hard to fathom, but Scripture makes this clear, saying, “Do you not know [realize] that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God” (1 Cor. 6:19). Incidentally, this is why we must honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20), and why—when a man commits a sexual sin—the sin is “against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).

God resides within us the way He dwelled in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle in the desert, and later in the temple. The Most Holy Place was the focal place of worship and is of great significance to us as a spiritual structure inside of us. The Most Holy Place was accessed for special purposes then, and it is essential that we access it now. This is where God sits on His throne in our hearts, and where we will go to draw near to Him.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Where does God “reside” during the Church Age?

**Question 2.** What does the Old Testament temple “mirror”?

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 Kings 8:13**—I [Solomon] have built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.

**1 Kings 8:27-30**—But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, “My name shall be there,” so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

## ***Remember***

God dwells in a temple in the hearts of believers, and dwells at the same time in a “prototype” temple in heaven. No “temple” will contain Him, but He “localizes” Himself to make Himself available to us, as we meet His conditions.

## ***B. The Curtain is Opened Between God and Us***

In the tabernacle, the “Holy Place” was behind a curtain. This is where the priests conducted rituals, sacrifices, and ceremonies on a daily basis to seek God’s forgiveness for the sins they and the people committed. Beyond the Holy Place was another place, behind another curtain, called the Most Holy Place. This is where the glory (light) of God actually resided. The Most Holy Place was off-limits to the Jewish worshippers in the desert. The only person who could enter the Most Holy Place was the high priest, and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

Parenthetical Reminder: Sin is the greatest problem God had to solve concerning us. Isn’t it amazing that preachers and teachers of the Word spend so little time on forgiveness in the lives of believers? It has been central since the fall of man: what to do with sin. Yet a lot of attention is paid to self-enforced conformity to standards in the Bible, rather than dealing with our inability to meet them. God has provided solutions for sin, and for us to ignore them is to reject grace assets, and to proceed without forgiveness.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest prepared himself and entered the Most Holy Place to get forgiveness for his sins and the sins of all the people. He was “purified” for this entry, which enabled him to survive being in God’s “presence”. There he offered blood sacrifices to satisfy God’s justice in dealing with sin. This blood was a covering for the sins of the people, which they had committed during the previous year.

Leviticus 16:30 states the results of this practice, as follows: “...because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins.” A great deal of effort went into eradicating the transgressions of the people...because they all sinned.

The sacrifices that were done in the tabernacle depicted the sacrifice that Jesus Christ would make for us on the cross. His sacrifice covers our sins. Heb. 9:12 says “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” By His sacrifice, he has provided “eternal redemption”.

In the tabernacle, or the temple, a curtain, or “veil” prevented worshippers from entering the Most Holy Place. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were inadequate to cleanse them sufficiently to stand in God’s presence in the Most Holy Place. But Jesus entered that place, because He was sinless, and the sacrifice of His blood...His life...bridged the gap between perfect God and sinful

man, and left the door open for us to access God directly.

Matt. 27:50-51 says, “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Heb. 10:19-20 adds, “...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body....”

So the curtain blocking the Most Holy Place has been opened. Heb. 10:19 (seen above) tells us that we have confidence to enter because of the blood of Jesus. We claimed His blood when we became believers, and we are now eligible for entry into the place “where God is”. But not so fast...we have a problem...we still sin. We are good for eternity, but need cleansing in time, because of our sin. We want to get close to God, but we are screened for “uncleanness” before we can approach Him. Sin prevents access, and precludes fellowship and communion with Him.

So what can the blood of Jesus Christ do NOW, so that we can sustain fellowship with Him. Heb. 9:13-14 has the answer for this, as follows:

The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death [dead works], so that we may serve the living God!

The blood of Christ that cleanses us at salvation, also cleanses us during our Christian lives. His blood cleans our hearts and leaves our consciences clear. When we are clean, we can “serve the living God.” This is because the curtain has been torn, and the only thing that stands between God and us now is our sin. When that sin is removed by confession and forgiveness, we can come into God’s presence and bask in His glory and receive grace and blessings from His “glorious riches” (Phil. 4:19).

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** When Jesus died, what happened to the curtain to the Most Holy Place?

**Question 2.** When we are “screened” for suitability to come before God, what is the condition that will prevent access?

**Question 3.** The blood of Christ \_\_\_\_\_ us at salvation, and also when we confess our sins as believers.

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 John 1:10**—If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**Heb. 9:8-9**—The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able



to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

## ***Remember***

When Christ died, the veil preventing access to the Most Holy Place was ripped from top to bottom. This gives us access to this place, because we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. But, since we sin in time, this access is refused whenever we have not confessed and “updated” our cleansing.

## ***C. We Can Enter the Most Holy Place***

We want to enter the Most Holy Place, because that is where we can be intimate with God, and draw on His power and holiness to enable us to perform the loving acts that represent service for Him. For the high priest to enter the Most Holy Place, as we stated earlier, he had to be “purified”. Part of the sacrifices done in the Most Holy Place depicted the blood of Christ being applied to us to provide atonement and salvation through faith in His work. Other parts anticipated the way believers could have their sins removed...by the same blood.

We are “under the blood” for purposes of eternity, but the inevitable sins we commit as believers put our “temporal” relationship with God in jeopardy, and *keep us from entering the Most Holy Place*. Like the high priest, we have to be purified to enter, and we do that by applying 1 John 1:9...confessing our sins. This sets us up to go into the Most Holy Place.

So where is the Most Holy Place? We have seen that the “temple” is within us, and the Most Holy Place is inside the temple, so the Most Holy Place has to be INSIDE OF US! The temple within us follows the same architectural structure that is seen in the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament, but notice this: This temple is personalized to us! The Most Holy Place is our special and private meeting place where we can commune with God in a unique and intimate way. But we are not allowed in, if we cannot pass the purity test at the door.

This means there are places inside of us where we can go only if certain conditions are met. We must be purified by confession, or we will be halted at the gate for contraband...or sin. But when we pass the smell test of God’s examination, we qualify to go in, and we can do many things that we cannot do on the “outside”. The only thing we can do when we are outside the Most Holy Place is confess our sins. But when we move to the inside, we can do all the things we have studied in this book: study, pray, trust, surrender, walk in the Spirit, wait on God, serve Him, and so on.

It is bleak and desolate outside the Most Holy Place, a sort of “Antarctica” of the Christian life...cold and unfruitful. But when we move to the inside, the good times can roll. This is the place of plenty. This is where we can rest. We are welcomed to the celebration, if we just take the time to clean up first.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** True or false: When we are cleansed at salvation by the blood of Christ, we will never be dirty again.

**Question 2.** Where is the Most Holy Place?

**Question 3.** What is the qualification for believers to enter the Most Holy Place?

## *Other Scriptures*

**1 John 1:9**—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**Heb. 10:14**—...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

**Heb. 10:22**—...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

## *Remember*

When we are cleansed, we can go into the Most Holy Place, where we commune with God. This is the place where we are energized by grace assets...and blessed with firm promises...from God. This is the point of contact between finite man and the true and living God.

## *D. Approaching the Throne of Grace*

Heb. 4:14-15 says the following:

Therefore since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Jesus was subjected to every temptation that we are, and—as a man—used the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain Him to avoid every single one of them. He did not succumb, but He knows what it feels like to be in the flesh. So our High Priest is perfect, yet He *understands* how hard it is to be in these bodies and in this world, and how hard Satan tries to get us off track and prevent us from accessing the power God makes available to us.

The next verse in Heb. 4 (v. 16) is extremely important: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” What

is the throne of grace? It is the Most Holy Place...the innermost part of the temple within us...the place we cannot go without being cleansed.

Notice that we can “approach” the throne of grace, but cannot “go in”, as it were, if sin is standing out in our hearts. When we approach the throne, what are we looking for? We are looking to “receive mercy”. And what is “mercy”? It is God’s side of the equation in the formula for forgiveness. Our side is humility and confession.

We come to the threshold of the Most Holy Place with confidence (in Him), looking for forgiveness. This is the purification station, where we get sterilized for fitness to enter the Most Holy Place. Then observe what happens when we are purified and actually go in. We receive “grace” to “help us”. This is where the benefits of grace kick in...where fellowship is fully restored...where we reclaim the untarnished insignia of royalty.

At the threshold of the Most Holy Place, we receive “mercy” and get forgiveness, so we can go inside. It is then that we can draw near to God, Who is expecting us. We saw before that we can enter this place, because of the blood of Christ. Heb. 10:21 says, “...we have a high priest over the house of God [Jesus Christ]...” He is our High Priest and Advocate and Intercessor. This is why we have confidence that we can come before the throne of grace.

Then verse 22 explodes with good news! Since we have this High Priest acting in our behalf, and since this gives us confidence to enter the Most Holy Place, “...let us draw near to God.” When we enter the Most Holy Place, we DRAW NEAR TO GOD! And why are we able to draw near to God? Here is the answer from Heb. 10:22, in its entirety:

...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Generally, these are things that the high priest in the Old Testament had to do to be purified so he could enter the Most Holy Place. And this is what we must do to enable *us* to enter. We are able to enter because our hearts are “full of faith”, and because they have been “sprinkled” with the blood of Jesus, which frees our consciences from “guilt”. We are thereby “washed”, cleansed, sin-free, forgiven, covered...by confessing our sins. That is when we can draw near to God.

James 4:6-10 gives the full account of our drawing near to God. Here is what this passage says:

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

This passage reinforces the need for us to be cleansed by confession (wash, purify, grieve, mourn, wail, etc.), before we draw near to God. But then it goes beyond that. It calls for “submission”,

which is surrender to God's will...a token of maturity. And with maturity comes the adoption of God's grace and strength. And with this strength comes resistance to Satan. And when the resistance goes on long enough, Satan finally gives up...and leaves us alone!! That is when we will be close to God and will have His unobstructed blessings...to live in victory and celebration...right here in the enemy's camp.

God, grant us grace to reach this pinnacle of faith and service, where we receive all the privileges and benefits that come with being your "good and faithful servants" (Matt. 25:23).

When we finally enter the Most Holy Place, there is but one thing left for us to do, and that is to KNEEL AND PRAY in the brilliant presence of the Most High God.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** How was Jesus able to resist Satan and sin?

**Question 2.** What is it that we receive at the threshold of the Most Holy Place...or when we "approach the throne"?

**Question 3.** If we mature and resist Satan long enough, what will he do?

## *Other Scriptures*

**Ps. 32:1-2**—Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

**Ps. 25:9**—He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

## *Remember*

We come boldly before the throne of grace, because we believe we will get mercy there, resulting in forgiveness. And we know that—when forgiveness is given—we will find grace, and will get some much-needed help.

## Chapter 32

# Living in God's Kindness

### *In This Chapter...*

- A. Recognizing the Promise-Giver*
- B. Believing the Promises*
- C. Conditional Access to the Promises*
- D. The Promises*

### *A. Recognizing the Promise-Giver*

God will do what suits His purpose, but that does not mean that you are incidental to His plan. His plan is specifically directed at you personally. You are not some insignificant organism absorbed into a divine eco-system in which the individual unit is disposable. No. You are His child...you are valued and He loves you dearly. He wants to give you grace. God's plan is not to *use* you, but to *bless* you. Ironically, when we receive His provision, His blessings and grace, we become more useful than ever.

The hold-up on the blessings is not God, but us. Like every other aspect of the Christian life, preparation must be complete, and conditions must be right. God wants us, as believers, to know who we are...so that we can recognize our dependence on Him...and He wants us to acknowledge who *He* is: He is the true and living God.

In all the techniques He has given us so we can get closer to Him, there is a kind of humility that He is asking from us, a clear view of our smallness, compared to His greatness. He is the creator, planner, and sustainer of all that exists, and we are His creation. Yet He is good and kind and loving toward us, something that may get lost in all the talk of our sinfulness and our perpetually being on stand-by for discipline.

We must remember GRACE. Grace is defined as “undeserved favor”, which is expressed as mercy and forgiveness, for sure, but—even more than that—as kindness—often seen in our translations as “love”. Everything that happens is designed to draw us deeper into His grace, and to get us to *accept what He wants to give us*. It's not as though we have to convince God to give us what we need...He already wants to give it to us. We just have to learn how to *allow God to give it to us*. It does not fit the notion of grace that somehow God is withholding good things. It is in the very generosity of His nature that the promises are given...and that the blessings are guaranteed.

When we confess, pray, learn the Word, believe the Word, and endure tests and trials, we become equipped to walk in the Spirit, walk by faith, and walk by the truth. In this path, fellowship prevails, wisdom dominates, and the Holy Spirit controls. God's techniques for living are “grace assets”, that prepare us to receive the *good* that God wants to *give*.

For us to know God's kindness and access His gifts, we must *understand* His promises, and *know* what He has prepared for us. It is reassuring to discover that everything God does with and for us is based on His core character trait, which is “love”. *Discipline* is even an expression of this love...God—like any loving parent—will caringly and purposefully train us...and even punish us, as needed, to prompt improvement.

When we understand God's nature, we will trust and use His techniques to improve ourselves, and then we will embrace the provision that He wants to give us, so we can operate fully in the sphere of grace. By the same token that we *know* and *believe* the grace techniques, we can *know* and *believe* the promises, so we can *extract from them all that God wants us to have*. To do this, we must know three things: 1) how to *qualify* for the promises, 2) how to *claim* the promises, and 3) what the promises are, so we will know *what to claim*. That sums up the content of the rest of this chapter.

The contingency for being blessed is always there. It comes with conditions, as we have seen—and as we will see again in the next section. There is always an “if” clause in the contract. We see this many times in Scripture: “if we confess”, “if they will heed my word”, “if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray”, and “if you believe”. Do you see the techniques in these: confess, study, pray, and trust? These are always followed by promises of grace provisions: forgiveness, wisdom, answered prayer, and blessings. That's how it works.

The hand of grace is extended “if” we do what God calls for.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** Our ship is coming in, but it is delayed. What might be causing this hold-up?

**Question 2.** What three things should we know in order for us to get ready to receive God's blessings?

**Question 3.** All God's provisions are based on His \_\_\_\_\_ .

## Other Scriptures

**Ps. 119:140**—Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

**Ps. 25:9**—Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

### Remember

God is the source of all things. It is our good fortune that He loves us, and intends to bless us. When we can learn what He wants to give us, and find out how to get to these things, the opportunities for joyful service will be endless.

## B. Believing the Promises

There are basically two responses to the Word: 1) *acceptance*, and 2) *rejection*. Accepting the truth entails the whole learning and processing routine, which is an expression of *accepting God*. Rejection can take place at any point before or during learning, as the truth is ambushed by carnality or negative volition. We see the difference in the outcomes of these two responses in the following:

1. **Acceptance** of truth by *believing* it will result in these:
  - A. Techniques will be believed and followed.
  - B. Promises will be believed.
  - C. Growth of faith and fruit will occur.
  - D. Blessings will be abundant.
  - E. Promises will be fulfilled, as they are stated in the Word.
2. **Rejection** of truth by *not believing* it will have the following effects:
  - A. Fellowship will not be sustained and prayers will not be heard.
  - B. Faith in the Word will be absent.
  - C. Faith will not grow.
  - D. Cursing (as in discipline) will be seen and felt.
  - E. Promises cannot be “claimed” and will not be fulfilled.

Not believing the Word and not using the techniques has a grace-dampening effect, whereas faith and spirituality activate grace. Believing the Word regarding the techniques for living is well-established as a requirement. Now we see a new proscription, which is this: believing the promises. Looking more closely at these two, believing the techniques, and believing the promises, we see the following differences:

1. **Believing in God's grace techniques** will keep us in fellowship, move us closer to God, cause us to mature, and enable us to maintain our spirituality. Here are the funda-

mental techniques:

- A. Confession of sins to God.
- B. Constant prayer.
- C. Consistent study.
- D. Believing God and His Word.
- E. Building faith through God's training.

2. **Believing in God's Promises** gives us the privilege to claim what is promised. Here is where we enter God's rest. This is the Most Holy Place...the place of blessing...where we "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." When we have sufficient faith to believe the promises, we get what is promised.

These two aspects of faith...believing the techniques and believing the promises...work together. By using the techniques, we build a faith that believes the promises. Then faith in the promises opens the floodgates of blessing.

Notice again the "proviso" and "provision" arrangement. When we MEET THE REQUIREMENTS that God has specified, He will DO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED. If we "delight in the Lord", He will "give us the desires of our hearts". If we "seek His kingdom and righteousness first", then "all these things will be given to us." "If we dwell in the shelter of the Most High", then "under his wings, we will find refuge." When we satisfy the proviso, we can KNOW that what He has promised will be delivered.

More can be said about the application of faith to the Word. Believing the techniques and applying them is an *active* process. We *apply* the methods to get clean, to be filled with the Spirit, to pray, to study, and to endure training. This is the part of faith that is "seen", as per James 2, which distinguishes between the active faith of fellowship and the dead faith of carnality. Believing the promises, on the other hand, is more passive and *unseen*, a place of being still and waiting on the Lord. This is the place of resting and not working, a time of surrendering to His will, and a condition of "no fear", as we assimilate His divine assurances.

Techniques, then, satisfy the "proviso", whereas promises "provide". To live in the fullness of God, we must both 1) satisfy the proviso, and 2) receive the provision. God's love yearns to fellowship with us and to bless us. His love surrounds us to protect us, sustain us, and bless us. We see this throughout Scripture. A good illustration of His care is found in the following:

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. Even the hairs on your head are numbered, so don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matt. 10:29-31)

When we really understand Who God is, what His grace is like, how much He loves us, and what life (that is truly life) can become, we will step back in awe at the incomparable privilege we have to know the power of His Spirit (techniques) and to be blessed by Him (promises).



## Checking for Understanding

**Question 1.** What are the two possible responses to the Word?

**Question 2.** Name two categories of “believing the Word” (two major areas of faith in the Word).

**Question 3.** Techniques satisfy the \_\_\_\_\_; promises give us the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Hint: The first three letters in both answers is “pro”.)

## Other Scriptures

**James 2:18b**—Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

**Heb. 11:11**—By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

**Heb. 11:33**—...who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions.

## Remember

Promises in the Bible are just words on pages, if they are not learned and accepted by faith. Faith plays a crucial role, both as a primary technique, and as the substance of maturity that equips us to accept the promises, and to receive what they portend.

## C. Conditional Access to the Promises

God's promises are firm and trustworthy. They are made by the all-powerful, all-loving God, and have all the divine impetus that this implies. The promises are more reliable than anything else in the universe. But there are conditions for having them fulfilled, as we have already suggested. Many promises are predicated upon our being prepared to receive their benefits. If we are not prepared, and do not “qualify”, the promises will be sealed behind a glass wall...we can see them, but we can't get to them.

The preparation needed to receive the promises have been delineated. Now what we hope to do is cement—through repetition—the notion that we *really do* have to satisfy prerequisites before we can claim the promises. When we use the *grace assets* for living, the outcome will be fellowship, faith, and maturity, with full operation of the Spirit's strength. This will enable us to move beyond the glass wall to a place where promises await us.

We have just about exhausted 2 Pet. 1:3-4...having seen this passage many times from many angles.

But one last look will reveal things we have not seen before. Before we can lay claim to the substance of God's promises, there are some hoops we must jump through. Here is what this passage says:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

This is a comprehensive statement, telling us that God's power gives us "everything we need" for "every part of our lives", including physical needs, as well as those considered "spiritual". Notice the phrase, "Through these he has given us very great and precious promises". "Through these" means, "through the medium of our godliness and knowledge". In other words, the **promises** come *after, and as a result of*, our adopting and following the **techniques** that will equip us for life and godliness. Then the promises will rise up in front of us...given by God. These promises are monumental...jaw-droppingly huge...superlative! This is why God calls them "great and precious"!

Here is the sequence of events in 2 Pet. 1:3-4, just quoted:

1. When we get "knowledge of Him", we learn the techniques that equip us for "life and godliness". (cf. 2 Pet. 1:2)
2. When we employ these techniques, the promises are activated, because the conditions have been met.
3. By using the techniques and believing the promises, we are enabled to partake of the divine nature, which is a graduated form of "knowledge of Him". Partaking of the divine nature, or "God's thoughts", takes us deeper.
4. As a result of our knowledge of Him and participation in His divine nature, we have real "victory" in our lives...even over our own evil impulses...but there's more....
5. Because we have this knowledge, and because we are using the techniques we have learned, we can now absorb and believe the promises, thus getting the *full benefit* of all that the promises offer. Put another way, the techniques qualify us to claim the promises, and faith in the promises enables us to receive the provisions and blessings they enumerate.

We must not forget that there are "strings" attached to the promises. Almost all promises are "conditional", meaning that our claiming them is based on our spiritual "condition". If our condition is right, we will be prepared to receive the benefits of the promises. Until then, our first priority must be to learn and use the tactics God provides for maturity and spirituality, so that we will be prepared to get the blessings that are promised.

And we must not forget the place of faith in claiming the promises. We will get nothing from promises we do not understand...or do not believe. Faith is the key to our walk in the Spirit, and the way for us to get closer to God. So it makes perfect sense that faith should be the primary variable in determining whether we receive the benefits lavishly offered in God's promises. Once

again...*believe* and *receive*.

The land of promises takes us into a new dimension. When we know and believe the promises, a new day will arrive in our lives, and our hearts and lives can open up to the riches that God wants us to have.

Now: the promises.

## *Checking for Understanding*

**Question 1.** True or false: Promises are unconditional.

**Question 2.** To claim the promises, we must understand them and \_\_\_\_\_ them.

## *Other Scriptures*

**Eph. 3:12**—In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

**Rom. 4:20-21**—Yet he (Abraham) did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

## *Remember*

When we are in fellowship, and believe and understand the promises, they will be fulfilled.

## *D. The Promises*

There are many ways to separate and understand the promises that God makes to mankind and to believers. We concentrate in this study on the promises that pertain to our daily lives and our functions as God's children. The categories that we will cite include the following:

Promises of love.

Promises of protection.

Promises of provision.

Promises of blessing.

Promises of empowerment.

We will have a number of verses for each of these categories. These are powerful assurances. We must be reminded that many promises are contingent on conditions being met before they will be implemented, or "delivered upon". Many verses clearly state the requirements to be satisfied before the promises they pronounce can be fulfilled, but some verses give promises without the condition being specified. Note this: Even when the condition is not given, we know well by now that the *benefits of grace* will not be accessed if the *techniques of grace* are bypassed. Our assumption is that our

ability to claim God's promises...and to virtually hold Him to His word...will *always* depend on the spiritual condition that we bring to the "claiming ceremony".

I Ki. 8:56 says, "Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses." This is the standard for God's promises: Not one word fails. In discussing God's ability to fulfill His promises, Abraham knew that "God had power to do what he had promised" (Rom. 4:21). Numbers 23:19 adds the following about God's reliability in fulfilling His promises: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

God's promises are *covenants...contracts*. He is *able* to keep His promises, and He *will*...His Word is binding. He knew long before He made the promises what their outcome would be, so He made them advisedly and knowingly. They are not "slips of the tongue" or "convenient commitments made in moments of passion". No. These are planned...the words of the Eternal Constant, our God, and they will be done, exactly as He has declared.

We know this, from Lk. 1:37: "Nothing is impossible with God." We are asked to believe in a Being for whom there is no impossibility. It is within the realm of a no-limits scope that we need to look at God's *ability*—and His *commitment*—to keep His promises to us. We do not need to look at our circumstances as the baseline for anticipating our future, but our eyes must be turned toward the power and promises of God. He determines what happens, so we can have full confidence in ANY situation. If we trust what He says, He will do it.

In that vein, Eph. 3:12 says, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." In fellowship with Him, and by believing in Him...His techniques and His promises...we will move closer to Him, and *that's where the power is!* Even a little faith will go a long way, as per Lk. 17:6, which says, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to the mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." It is the OBJECT of our belief that gives faith its power. When that object is a promise that God has made, it has all the power of creation. Promises are actually *targets* for our faith...giving us something "concrete" that we can direct our faith towards.

Next, we will see the promises within each category listed above. Open your heart, prepare to learn, and let these promises become your personal guarantees for God's gracious provision. Believe them...claim them. They are for you.

**Promises of God's Love.** The entire Bible is an exhibition of God's love. He wants very much for us to know how much He loves us. Probably the biggest part of acknowledging God is opening our eyes to His love. Love is the basis for His making promises to us, and the reason His plan applies to each of us personally. Many verses and much discussion could be rendered on God's love, since it is the foundation of all our benefits from Him, but we list only one very important one here, as follows:

Rom. 8:38-39—"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither

the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God's love is pervasive, seen as background or foreground for all promises, so we will see His love continually in the promises that follow.

**Promises of Protection.** These passages take us into the heart of God's commitments to us. Protection from God is based on our *spiritual condition*, but—if the conditions are met—we can know that His protective arms surround us. Here are some of the promises regarding our protection:

- Ps. 91:1—"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."
- Ps. 91:9-10—"If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent."
- Ps. 91:14-15—"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him."
- Ps. 37:3-4—"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."
- Ps. 27:3-5—"Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident."
- 1 Sam. 17:47—"All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give all of you into our hands."
- Prov. 21:31—"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."
- Matt. 10:30-31a—"And even the hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid..."
- 2 Thess. 3:3—"But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."
- Ps. 23:4—"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."
- Ps. 3:6—"I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side."
- Ps. 42:11 (KJV)—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Endnote 16)
- Heb. 13:6—"So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"
- Is. 41:10—"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

**Promises of Provision.** Here are some passages showing what God promises to *provide* in our spiritual lives, and our physical lives, as well. Watch for conditions, such as trusting, being in fellowship, learning the Word, praying, and trusting. If these are satisfied, God assures us of the following:

- Heb. 4:16—"Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
- James 4:8—"Come near to God, and he will come near to you."
- John 15:7—"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."
- Phil. 4:6-7—"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- James 1:5-6a—"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt..."
- 2 Cor. 12:9a—"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"
- Phil. 4:19—"And my God shall supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."
- Rom. 8:28 (NET)—"And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."
- 1 Pet. 3:12a—"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer."
- James 5:16b—"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."
- 1 Jn. 1:9—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
- 1 Jn. 5:14-15—"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."
- 2 Cor. 4:16—"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."
- Matt. 6:32-33—"For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."
- Ps. 145:13b—"The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down."
- Ps. 145:18-20—"The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy."
- 1 Pet. 5:7—"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."

**Promise of Blessings.** God's blessings are for our comfort and joy. They are *good* things, things that we are delighted to receive. God wants to *bless* us, and that is what he promises. Don't forget about the conditions, but if they have been met, bring your basket, because it is going to be filled. Here are some verses on the blessings that God promises:

- Jer. 29:11-13—"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."
- James 4:10—"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."
- 1 Jn. 3:21-22—"Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him."
- Ps. 92:12-15—"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green...."
- Deut. 28:1-8—"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God:

You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

The fruit of your womb will be blessed and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

The Lord will grant that the enemies that rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you."

**Special Note:** For the promises made to believers in the Old Testament, as well as to believers in the transition period between the Age of Law and the Church Age, there is a carry-over into our lives today. We are speaking of God—the same God now as then—tending the "righteous ones" among His children, regardless of the time, and He wants to give the chosen ones now the same blessings He gave to the chosen ones long ago. There may be nuances of difference, but the blessings are basically the same. These blessings are for us, and we can claim them... "if we fully obey".

**Promises of Empowerment.** The first part of "living in the *power* of God's Word" involves *using techniques* to *prepare* for receiving truth, and then *applying it*. This part is active, "technical", and preliminary (a prelude to claiming the promises). The second part of "living in the *power* of the Word" involves knowing and claiming God's promises. This part is passive, based on simple faith. All we do with the promises is *believe* them.

Part of the "power" of the Word, then, is found in believing and following God's techniques; the rest is couched in believing the promises. Here are some passages that promise God's strength:

- Ps. 73:26—My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- Ps. 46:1-3, 10a—God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.
- Phil. 1:6—Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- Phil. 4:12b-13—I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
- 2 Cor. 4:7—But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
- 2 Tim. 1:7—For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
- Is. 12:2—Lord Jehovah is my strength and my deliverance.

**Conclusion.** The truth has been given: God is waiting to bless you...He has your name on numerous blessings that await your claiming them. Just wash your hands and pick them up.

### ***Key Points: Part Seven***

- When we fulfill Part One through Part Six, we can receive the benefits of Part Seven.
- When we confess, pray, study, trust, and endure God's training, we qualify for blessings.
- God's promises specify the blessings which are ours, if we meet God's conditions, and are drawing closer to Him.
- The closer we are to God, the more effective His promises become.
- We must learn and believe God's promises.
- God wants to bless us.



# Endnotes

1. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 873.
2. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 909.
3. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 872.
4. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by Joseph Henry Thayer, for Greek words *nous*, *psyche*, *pneuma*, and *cardia*. This reference was found online at [www.tgm.org/bible.htm](http://www.tgm.org/bible.htm), under the website listing, *Free Bible Tools—Strong’s Concordance*.
5. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 876.
6. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 888.
7. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 769.
8. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 930.
9. *ABC’s for Christian Growth*, p. 187.
10. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 940.
11. From “Pleasing the Lord”, an article by J. Hampton Keathley, III, p. 2. Biblical Studies Press, 1998. This article is available at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).
12. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 908.
13. *Interlinear Bible*, p. 922.
14. *Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible*, by William E. Vine, p. 272. Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN, 1999.
15. “Paramount Issues in Life”, by J. Hampton Keathley, III, pp. 2-4. Biblical Studies Press, 1997. This article is available at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).
16. *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, “Ps. 145:3”, p. 713,”. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983.

## *About the Author*

Dick Gibbs spent 25 years in public service as an educator and curriculum designer. He served as teacher, principal, superintendent, and curriculum developer in the public school systems of Texas. He has now taken his skills in the area of learning-program development and is channeling them into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much of his career in education was spent developing programs for at-risk students. This book is designed for at-risk Christians (or new ones). The same way that he built systems for filling in gaps and establishing solid foundations for student learning, he has built on the foundation of the Word to provide understandable lessons that facilitate Christian living and accelerate the growth and effectiveness of believers.

Gibbs began an intensive study of the Word in 2010, and initiated a practice at that time of recording his findings in writing. He has written ten books since then...now more than that. *Bible Studies Recapitulated: A Three Volume Set* is the culmination of all his previous books...coupled with his experiences in life and his professional career...incorporating what he has learned into a turn-key, easy-to-read, step-wise study book. He has been surprised to discover what the Bible REALLY says about living, and is sure that you will be surprised, as well, when you work through the lessons he presents.

It must be said that the central player and point in this “work” is not the author, but God. If—and only if—God is in this writing, it will be helpful and beneficial to believers who read it, and God will be glorified by its dissemination.