

THE WORK OF GOD

“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’” Joh 5:17

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’” Joh 6:29

Introduction:

The plan of God is eternal. Jesus Christ was slain for sinners in the mind of God before the world began (Rev 13:8). Because the wisdom of God is infinite, so His plan is infinite in its intricacy. At the same time, God is the ultimate of simplicity, and therefore so is His plan. Complication is the opposite of purity. Simplicity is the outcome of purity (2Co 11:3). As a result, we can identify from the Scriptures some understanding of the outworking of the wonderful plan of God.

1. The Father works through the Son.
“This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Mat 3:17
2. The Son works through the Holy Spirit.
“I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” Joh 1:33

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth ...” Joh 14:16–17a
3. The Holy Spirit works through the Word.
“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” Joh 16:13
4. The Word of God works through the Believer.
“Of His own will He [The Father] brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Jam 1:18
5. The Believer works through faith.
“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for [unto] good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:8–9

Put in simple terms, the Father works through the Son. The Son works through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works through the Word. The Word works through the believer. The believer works through living faith.

When the child of God brings forth good fruit, all the glory goes back to the Heavenly Father as the author of this amazing plan.

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”
Joh 15:8

Only as the believer follows the plan of God, by abiding in the love of Christ, is this circle of divine initiation made complete.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Joh 15:4–5

It will be to our advantage, as those who believe in Jesus Christ, to become more familiar with this simple yet profound plan of God. The better we understand how our Heavenly Father works in this world, the better we can play the part He has designed for us.

I. The Father Works Through the Son

How could an infinite and all-knowing God make Himself known to mankind? How can we comprehend with all of our limitations the Almighty God? God created us within certain boundaries, which we cannot escape (Act 17:26). These boundaries include time, space, matter, and intellect. We can only exist in the present, but God is not confined by time. We can only be one place at a time, but God is all-present. We are confined by physical bodies in a material world, but God is Spirit. We are of very limited intelligence (no matter how we may delude ourselves), but God knows all that is, and all that could be.

Before God created man, He chose to reveal Himself as a man. Thus the united members of the Godhead; Father, Son, and Spirit, chose to make man, *“In our image, according to our likeness”* (Gen 1:26). God placed within man the creature everything necessary to reveal the nature of God in the incarnate Christ. This is an amazing truth! God so designed man, that He might be able to reveal Himself as a man. And that through that man, Jesus of Nazareth, God could be fully known, even as one knows a friend (2Ch 20:7; Isa 41:8; Joh 15:14; Jam 2:23).

The cry of Job in his torment was, *“For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both”* (Job 9:32–33).

Yet the message of the entire Old Testament was that such a man was coming. This Job knew, for he said later, *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God”* (Job 19:25–26). Since many scholars believe the book of Job to be the oldest book of the Bible, this is an astounding confession.

According to the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus came into this world, *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Gal 4:4–5). He alone could fill the vacuum, and span the barrier, between God and sinful mankind, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”* (1Ti 2:5).

In the majestic yet humble Person of Jesus Christ, mankind could now see the Living Word of God. By His earthly life the Lord Jesus made the transcendent God imminent and present. The vague and impersonal intimations and conclusions we might draw about God from creation (Rom 1:19–20) were now revealed in a holy Person. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ... No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”* (Joh 1:1, 4, 14, 18).

In every action of His earthly existence, and in the glorious climax of His work on the cross, He revealed the love of God for His creatures. *“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him”* (1Jo 4:9). All that the Father wants us to know about Himself He has revealed through Christ. And all that He desires to do for us as sinful human beings, He has accomplished through the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This includes:

1. Redemption—Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins (Eph 1:7).
2. Propitiation—God’s justice is satisfied with the work of Christ (1Jo 2:2).
3. Reconciliation—All who believe in Christ are eternally reconciled to God in a relationship of peace (Rom 5:1, 9).
4. Sanctification—Abiding in Christ sets us apart from the world (Heb 10:10, 14).
5. Glorification—Our “blessed hope” is eternal glory in His presence forever (Rom 8:28–30).

Truly, the Father has chosen to work through His Beloved Son. As Jesus said to His disciples in His last night with them, *“The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works”* (Joh 14:10b). But this is only the beginning of the outworking of the astounding plan of God. It was not enough for the Heavenly Father to choose to reveal Himself as a man. His desire went beyond this, to actually include frail members of the human race as instruments of His work. Having taken on the nature of man, God now willed to make those who trust in Christ to become *“partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2Pe 1:4b). This would require two amazing provisions of power: The Holy Spirit and the New Testament Word.

II. The Son Works Through the Spirit

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (Joh 14:16–18).

While Jesus was with His disciples in the upper room, before he was betrayed and crucified, Philip said, *“Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”* (Joh 14:8). Philip wanted a vision of God the Father, to which Jesus replied, *“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father ...”* (Joh 14:9). The Father was visible and knowable through His Son.

In just the same way, in promising to send the Spirit of God as an indwelling presence, Jesus said to His disciples, *“I will come to you”* (Joh 14:18b). As the Father was present in the Son, even so the Son is present in His Spirit. For this reason Paul assures us, *“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”* (Rom 8:9b–11).

This passage is filled with great truths! Notice that the Holy Spirit is spoken of both as the Spirit of Christ and also the Spirit of the Father (*“He who raised Christ from the dead”*). Thus where the Spirit of God is, there also is the Father and Son. Furthermore, the passage tells us what the ultimate goal is of the Spirit’s work in us. It is to conform us to Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29), by giving us the resurrection life of Christ, to be lived out even through these “mortal” (that is, sinful and subject-to-death) bodies. This is what Paul meant when he spoke of *“Christ [being] formed in you”* (Gal 4:19), and in expressing his desire *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection ...”* (Phi 3:10a). It was a consequence of this spiritual focus on the part of Paul that he was able to say, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gal 2:20). This should be the desire and aim of every child of God. But how can we attain to such a lofty goal? We have been given four commands regarding our relationship to the indwelling Spirit.

Four Spiritual Commands

1. *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Eph 4:30). By reading the context, beginning in v. 25, we see that it is sin, which grieves the indwelling Spirit. Since Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1Jo 3:8), and since all sin is of the devil, it grieves the Spirit when the believer commits sin. The solution to sin in our life is confession of the sin and correction (Pro 28:13; 1Jo 1:7, 9).
2. *“Do not quench the Spirit”* (1Th 5:19). Again, the context helps us understand the command. From vv. 11–22 we have 16 positive commands, with only vv. 19–20 being negative. The implication is that when we *“despise prophecies”* (that is, the Word of God) by failing to obey, the Spirit is quenched. The word used here means to stifle or smother a fire. From this we learn the destructive effects of sins of **omission**. It is not only by doing what is **wrong** that we hinder the Spirit in our life, but also when we fail to do what is **right**. Thus we learn that, *“Whatever is not from faith is sin”* (Rom 14:23).

3. *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph 5:18). This command has largely been misunderstood due to the word *“with,”* which should be translated *“by means of.”* The filling of the Spirit is not that we get more full of Him, but that we allow Him to fill us with the character of Christ. This is seen by comparing Gal. 4:19 and 5:22–23. It is the means to that *“fullness”* of which Paul spoke earlier in Ephesians 3:19–20. To be *“filled by the Spirit”* is to permit Him to form the life of Christ in and through us.
4. *“Walk in the Spirit”* (Gal 5:17). Once we permit the Spirit to have His way in our life, i.e., *“present yourself”* (Rom 6:13; 12:1–2), we are able to live life in His power. To *“walk in the Spirit”* is to live life *“according to the power that works in us”* (Eph 3:20). While we live in the Spirit, and under His control, we cannot commit sin (Gal 5:16b; 1Jo 1:5–7; 3:9, 24).

The Christian is a spiritually new creature (2Co 5:17), and is designed to live by the power of the Spirit of God. It is only as we *“abide in Christ”* (Joh 15:1–10) that we enjoy the *“abundant life”* of which Jesus spoke (Joh 10:10b). We see then that Jesus Christ works through His Spirit to achieve His goals in the life of the believer.

III. The Spirit Works through the Word

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Joh 14:26

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth ...”
Joh 16:13

Every child of God has been given two sources of divine power. The first is within, and it is the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit that Jesus does His work in us. The second is without, and it is the inspired and inerrant Word of God. As the Lord Jesus conveys His will for the individual believer to the Spirit of God (see Joh 16:13–14), the Spirit will then pursue that work through the Word of God. Let’s take a look at how the Spirit of God works in the Word of God.

The Work of the Spirit in God’s Word

1. First, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the REVELATION of God’s Word (1Co 2:9–13).
2. Having revealed God’s Word (specifically the New Testament) to the apostles and prophets (Eph 2: 20; 3:5), the Holy Spirit then INSPIRED them (just as He did Old Testament prophets) to accurately record the exact message from God in every word and phrase (2Pe 1:20–21; Rev 1:19).
3. Once the Word of God is recorded, The Spirit of God watches over it for its PRESERVATION for all generations (Mat 24:35; 1Pe 1:23, 25).
4. As we study the Word of God, it is essential that we have the ILLUMINATION of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:15–21; 3:14–20).
5. Finally, God’s Spirit gives to us the ability to make correct APPLICATION of the Bible to life (Gal 5:16–18, 22–23).

From the above observations it is evident that the Holy Spirit is intimately connected to the Word of God in every way. Is it any wonder that in His final message to the disciples in the upper room Jesus three times refers to Him as *“The Spirit of Truth”* (Joh 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)? Now let’s see how the Spirit works through God’s Word at the moment of salvation. When anyone believes in the offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit does five things to apply that promise to the one who believes.

The Work of the Spirit at Salvation

1. The Baptism of the Spirit.
“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...” (1Co 12:13a). It is this work that unites us to Jesus Christ forever. We become a member of His body. At the same time, we are members of His church, and intimately connected to every other believer. It is this union that forms the basis for *“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph 4:3). As Paul makes clear in the following verses (vv. 4–6), our unity has its basis in what we all share positionally as believers.
2. Regeneration by the Spirit.
“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Tit 3:5). The “washing away of our sins” (Joh 13:10; 1Co 6:11; Eph 5:26.) occurs at the moment of regeneration, which means to be “born again” (Joh 3:3, 7). At this moment, a *“new creature”* (2Co 5:17) is created, and the believer becomes a *“new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness”* (Eph 4:24).
3. Indwelling of the Spirit.
“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Rom 8:9b). With this statement Paul makes it clear that every child of God is indwelt by His Spirit. This is in fulfillment of Jesus promise, *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth ... for He dwells with you and will be in you”* (Joh 14:16–17). The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the believer constantly assures us of the promise of our Lord, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Mat 28:20b), and also that, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* (Heb 13:5b).
4. Sealing by the Spirit.
“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” (Eph 1:13). Remember that it was in the context of sin in the believer’s life, and the grieving of the Spirit, that we are given the promise, *“By whom (The Spirit) you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Eph 4:30). We could have no greater promise of our security in Jesus Christ! The word “sealed” comes from the ancient use of the signet ring, which was a guarantee of something being delivered without fail to its final destination. See how Paul uses this idea in regard to the offering for the saints in Jerusalem in Rom 15:28. We can be sure we will arrive safely at our final destination in Heaven!

5. Gifting by the Spirit.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit [i.e., “gifts” of v.4] is given to each one for the profit of all” (1Co 12:7). Every believer is given a spiritual gift at the moment of salvation. This gift is given according to the perfect will of God for the believer (vv. 11, 18). Our spiritual gift helps to define the plan of God for our lives. In answer to the often-asked question, “What does God want me to do?” we can say “Develop your spiritual gift by growing to maturity, so you can serve His body.” As Paul says elsewhere, *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift”* (Eph 4:7). This goal of our gift is *“For the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph 4:12b).

These works of the Holy Spirit are performed in the believer as he or she responds to the truth of God’s Word. Now take a look at how the Word goes to work in the believer.

IV. The Word Works through the Believer

“Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Jam 1:21b–22

We know that, *“the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,”* (Heb 4:12a). However, this power is only latent while the Word of God remains on the pages of the Bible. Not until it is received into the Spirit by faith does this divine energy find an outlet in life. For this reason the verse above continues, *“piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* When faith opens the door for the Word of God to enter into *“the inner man”* of the heart (Eph 3:16), then the power of God’s Word works through the one who believes. This is stated specifically in 1Th 2:13 which says, *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”* God’s Word can only do its work in the life of the believer who has *“ears to hear”* (Mat 13:9, 15, 16).

It is clear in the James passage cited above that he is writing to those who are already believers. First, he calls them *“brethren”* (Jam 1:2, 19), and reminds them of their regeneration (1:18). The burden of vv. 21–22 is that just as our initial faith brought us eternal salvation, even so we must continue to receive God’s Word by faith for daily “salvation” (deliverance) from the danger of failing to endure our trials and thus falling short of spiritual growth and maturity (1:2–8, 22–25).

God’s Word and the Issues of Life

The Word of God is an effective force to impact the main areas of the Christian life. Consider Pro 4:23, which says, *“Keep [guard] your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”* Just what are these issues that are so fundamental to the outcome of our life? The Bible presents us with five issues that ultimately make our life what it is.

1. Attitude.

Everything in life is affected by our attitude. While we cannot control our circumstances, we are always accountable for the attitude we choose to take in any situation. The Bible declares that there are only two basic attitudes possible: humility or arrogance (Jam 4:6; 1Pe 5:5). Each day we choose to live life in one attitude or the other, and our choice in this matter affects our whole life. The crux of the matter, however, is that we cannot choose humility apart from seeking the input of the Word of God. Since “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Pro 9:10a), we demonstrate our attitude toward God by how we respond to His Word. There is no greater mark of arrogance than the rejection of His Word. This is where all the issues of life begin. We are therefore to seek His Word—to hunger and thirst for it (Mat 6:33, 1Pe 2:2). In the plan of God the only way up is down. Therefore James says, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up*” (Jam 4:10).

2. Priorities.

Our priorities are pre-determined by our attitude. Again there are only two options: spiritual or material priorities. Either we “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” or we seek “*all these things*” (Mat 6:32–33). It cannot be refuted that a humble attitude will predispose us to set spiritual priorities, nor that an arrogant attitude will result in material priorities. Thus the attitude of the heart begins the process of determining all of the issues of our lives. This is why we also read in Luk 1:53, “*He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.*” Mary understood that God deals with each one of us on the basis of our attitude to Him, and that our attitude will either create a hunger for His Word, or result in the pursuit of self-gratification and materialism. Once our priorities are established the course of our life begins to take a firm set toward either blessing or cursing.

3. Decisions.

It is often said that we are the product of our environment. This is the coward’s approach to life. It is to abdicate personal responsibility for life and blame the tide of events for its outcome. Scripture will not allow us to use this evasion of personal accountability. The Bible teaches very clearly that we are the product of the decisions we make. Those decisions, however, are the product of our attitude and priorities.

There are only two kinds of decisions, which men can make: wise or foolish. “*See then that you walk circumspectly [carefully], not as fools but as wise,*” (Eph 5:15). Repeatedly these two decision-related concepts are set in contrast (cf. Pro 3:35).

Because a humble attitude leads to spiritual priorities (the essence of which is the Word of God), this will result in wise decisions that are Bible-based. On the other hand the proud person with a self-centered lifestyle is predisposed to foolish decisions with sorrowful consequences. Knowing these things to be true, Joshua challenged his generation, “*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” (Jos 24:15).

Whether we like it or not, our life will ultimately be the outcome of the decisions we make. The greatest of these decisions will be whether we will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then live

by His Word. We cannot even comprehend now what the eternal outcome of those two decisions will be!

4. Actions.

We do what we do because we think as we think. This was true of our Lord in the night of His betrayal. When we read Joh 13:1–5 we see that Jesus knew that His hour had come, and that He would return to the Father. He also knew that Judas would betray Him, and that He had come from God and was about to return to Him. He knew that the disciples were not in fellowship with the Father, having entered the upper room arguing about who would be greatest in the Kingdom of God (cf. Luk 22:24). Yet knowing these only strengthened His actions of loving the disciples utterly and working for their restoration.

As with Jesus, so our actions are the product of the way we think, and the decisions we make. There are again only two courses of action open to man: right or wrong/good or evil. Jesus said, *“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad [evil] and its fruit bad [evil]; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”* (Mat 12:33–34). It is unmistakable that our actions begin in our attitude and are connected like links in a chain to priorities and decisions. Humble attitude produces spiritual priorities resulting in wise decisions, which results in good (righteous) actions. The contrary path can only end in evil practices. This is as inevitable as the fact that a good tree bears good fruit and vice versa.

The issue of good versus evil has plagued the human race since the Garden of Eden. Six times in the creation account God declares His work to be good (Genesis 1). Then, in chapter two, Adam and Eve are given a command, which required a decision, regarding the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* (Gen 2:9, 17). There was no middle option—it was one or the other. By their decision to eat of the tree and act of disobedience, evil entered the human race. The presence of evil is manifested in every form of sorrow and suffering known to man. With every foolish decision mankind makes, acts of evil follow, accompanied by consequences of suffering. Men often ask belligerently why, if there is a God, He does not stop all the evil in the world. The answer is simple. To put an end to evil and suffering, God would have to put an end to the human race, which insists on using its God-given freedom to choose evil over good. Again, evil actions can only be traced back to arrogant attitudes, just as good actions find their root in humble attitudes.

5. Results.

The final issue of life is the inevitable results of decisions made. Good actions ultimately bring blessing, whereas evil actions ultimately bring cursing from God. I emphasize “ultimately” because this world hates all that is good and will always try to stifle its expression in any form. Men often suffer greatly for the good they do, but ultimately there is reward.

We must distinguish between human and divine good. There is much that is called “good” that does not find its source in God. Men will care for the poor, feed the hungry, or cry out for justice, all in the name of humanism. We do not have to look long to find such works to be rooted in pride, vanity, and egotism. Thus, while appearing “good,” these things are in fact evil to the core. *“All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags”* (Isa 64:6). Jesus spent much of His

time denouncing these kinds of works. Read through Matthew chapters five and six for an example. For this reason, we read the most solemn and awful curses uttered from the mouth of Jesus to be against the religious perpetrators of these “hypocritical” actions (Mat 23). This also helps us to understand what God calls “good.” All true good must originate from God Himself, the fountain of all that is good. All men are, by nature, evil. God alone is good (Luk 18:19). Therefore, all true good must find its source in Him. Again, this begins with the attitude.

Consider the Beatitudes of Mat 5:1–12. The word “blessed” in the Greek is *makarios*, which implies sharing the happiness of God. The Hebrew equivalent of this word (which Jesus probably used) is *ashar*, which means, “to walk straight.” The idea here is that the straight path of uprightness leads to the end of blessedness. Another way of saying this is that “blessedness” is the end result of right attitudes, priorities, decisions, and actions, all of which begins in a right orientation to God. To be “poor in spirit” is to recognize ones spiritual poverty before God. This leads to “mourning” over ones sinful condition, which results in “meekness” and surrender, which leads to a “hunger and thirst for righteousness” by faith in God’s Word. Out of this comes “mercy” and “purity” and finally, in desiring to lead others to God, one becomes a “peacemaker,” reconciling men to God. While the world reacts with persecution, Jesus continues to declare that this is the path that leads to ultimate “blessedness,” and in fact it does! By acting as “the salt of the earth ... the light of the world” the believer will glorify the Heavenly Father (vv. 13–16), who “*is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Heb 11:6b with Mat 6:4, 6, 18). How true is the saying, “What we do in time echoes in eternity!”

The point in this section has been that God’s Word works through the believer. While the world tries to work by external pressure, the Word of God works from the center to the circumference of life. The issues of life come from the heart, and the “heart of the matter” is the attitude one has to God and His Word. By using the Word of God as the “plumb line” (Amo 7:7–8) or as the “rule” of life (Gal 6:16; Phi 3:16), our attitudes, priorities, decisions, actions, and results are brought into conformity with God, and therefore are blessed by Him. Of this fact we have His unshakable promise. “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (1Co 15:58).

V. The Believer Works Through Faith

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Heb 11:6

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Jam 2:17

“By grace ... through faith ... not of works ... for good works.” Eph 2:8–10

The final amazing channel through which God works is the one who is a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. In the original creation man was made in the image and likeness of God. This was to provide a vehicle through which God would reveal Himself as a man. But God became man that He might more fully share His nature with us. As we are told by Peter, “*by which [God’s glory and virtue] have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through*

these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:4).

When one believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life, he becomes a new creature (2Co 5:17). In that instant a “*new man*” is “*created according to God in true righteousness and holiness*” (Eph 4:24). This means that within the child of God is a new, regenerate nature that is sinless, and cannot be defiled by sin in any way. While the “old man” of flesh is still corrupt and sinful, we now have a totally new identity in Christ. For this reason we are told, “*whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God*” (1Jo 3:9). The “*seed*” here is the regenerate nature produced by the Word of God (Jam 1:18; 1Pe 1:23). This nature, which is born of God, is incapable of sin, and is untouched by even the sins of the “old nature” which we call “the flesh.”

It is the declared will of God that this “*new man*” grow and bear the fruits of eternal life. As the Holy Spirit works in the believer through the Word of God, the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22–23) is increasingly manifested as spiritual growth takes place. We are to grow up in our new life as we feed on the Word and allow the Spirit of God to apply it in our lives.

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby ...”
(1Pe 2:2)

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2Pe 3:18)

When we “*live by faith*” (Rom 1:17b) we increasingly enter into the service of our Lord, and He is able to accomplish His will and work in our lives. It is astounding to learn that we have an eternal destiny, designed for us by God Himself.

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” (1Pe 2:21)

This plan can only develop in our lives as we submit to the two sources of power, which God has given us: First, His indwelling Spirit, and second, His written Word. The One is within, the other without. They must be brought together through study and prayer on a daily basis. Like epoxy glue that requires the mixing of both resin and hardener in order to work, so it is with spiritual power. Surrender to the Holy Spirit leads to obedience to the Word of God. First, the Spirit *enlightens* us for the understanding of God’s Word (Eph 1:15–18). Then He *empowers* us to put it into practice (Eph 1:19–21, 3:16–20). In this way the Spirit works through the Word, and the believer works through faith.

All of the works, which the Father produces in the believer, have as their ultimate goal the expression of the love of God. God’s love is the force that flows from Father to Son, Son to Spirit, Spirit through the Word, and the Word through the believer. The life of faith is a life lived in the expression of God’s love for others.

For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” (Gal 5:5–6)

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” (1Pe 1:22)

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love ... This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Joh 15:10, 12)

As children of God we have been spiritually equipped to cooperate in the works of God. By faith in the gospel we have been *“created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* (Eph 2:10b). Because these works originate with God, and come to us through divine channels, we can only perform them in the power of faith. In reality they are not our works. We are simply a useable vessel in the Father’s hands. Since God’s power can only flow through pure vessels we need to take advantage of His cleansing daily. This cleansing is available to us along three lines.

1. The Once-for-All “Bath” of Salvation.

“Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet.’” (Joh 13:10a)

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph 5:25b–26)

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Tit 3:5)

2. The Daily Cleansing of Confession of Sins.

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow ... create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psa 51:7, 10)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psa 139:23–24).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1Jo 1:9)

3. The Cleansing of Obedience to His Word.

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1Jo 1:7)

The Scripture makes it very clear that as we focus on purity we experience power from above. Paul stressed this in his final letter to his understudy Timothy. *“Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [i.e., “iniquity”], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2Ti 2:21).*

It may be good for us to end our study by considering the daily disciplines of the Christian life. These responsibilities fall on each one of us if we are to engage in our part of the work of God.

Five Daily Disciplines

1. Confession of sins (1Co 11:28–31; 1Jo 1:9).
2. Feeding on the Word of God (Mat 4:4; 2Ti. 2:25; 1Pe 2:2).
3. Surrender to the Spirit in obedience (Gal 5:16; 1Jo 1:7).
4. Serving God by ministry to others (Joh 13:12–17; Gal 5:13).
5. Rest in faith, trusting in the Lord (Mat 11:29; Phi 4:6; Heb 12:2–3).

In village settings I often teach these in simple form. Using the care we give to the body every day to illustrate these points, I encourage them to wash, eat, walk, work, and rest daily in faith. This is always a great hit with them because of its simplicity and practicality. I trust we will be as eager to receive it and practice it. And I pray that this little study will clarify how God is at work in our world, and how we are to join in that work. May each of you know the joy of faithfully serving the King of kings and Lord of lords with increasing fruitfulness.